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CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING

SYRIA

PART 1

January to December 1947

(Continued from

"Further Correspondence respecting Eastern Affairs," Part 67)

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CONFIDENTIAL

CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING SYRIA

PART I.—JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1947

(Continued from "Further Correspondence respecting Eastern Affairs," Part 67)

CHAPTER I.—MISCELLANEOUS

E 12507/2/89

No. 1

FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT

(1)

Mr. Eyres to Mr. Bevin. (Received 28th December)

(No. 34) *Damascus,*
(Telegraphic) *28th December, 1946.*
My telegram No. 32.

New Government announced to-day consists of Jamil Mardam, Prime Minister, Interior and Health; Naim Antaki,

Foreign Affairs; Said Ghazzi, Finance; Ahmed Sharabati, Defence; Emir Adel Arslan, Education; Hikmat Hakim, National Economy; Adnam Atassi, Justice and Public Works.

E 12516/2/89

(2)

Mr. Eyres to Mr. Bevin. (Received 30th December)

(No. 35) *Damascus,*
(Telegraphic) *29th December, 1946.*
My immediately preceding telegram.

First three and last persons referred to are respectively 143, 11, 69 and 20 in Syrian Personalities, 1943. Minister of Defence and Minister of Education are unchanged. Hikmat Hakim was Minister of Public Works April to July 1945. A colourless individual.

2. Government consists mostly of people with no marked [group undecypherable] ions and little parliamentary following, with the exception of Adnam Atassi, the only member of the Opposition who could be induced to join this attempt at a coalition. Its life will depend on the attitude of Saadullah Jabri, who for the present has undertaken to support it.

E 170/170/89

No. 2

LEADING PERSONALITIES IN SYRIA

Mr. Eyres to Mr. Attlee. (Received 6th January)

(No. 27. Secret)
Sir, *Damascus, 27th December, 1946*
I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a revised report on the leading personalities in Syria, based on Foreign Office print "Syria and the Lebanon" of 1943.

2. As a result of the political changes in Syria during the past three years, many of those who were included in the report of 1943 have passed from the political scene, while a number of others have come into prominence. In order to keep the report as short as possible the personalities enumerated in the

attached list have been omitted. The following new names have been added:—

Aidi, Abdul Kerim.
Aifeh, Abdullah al.
Ayoubi, Ali.
Azam, Bedih bey.
Bakri, Mazhar.
Barazi, Munir Khalid.
Hatem, Dr. Anwar.
Hiffel, Sheikh Abbud al.
Ibrahim, Pasha, Khalil Bey
Inglizi, Issam.
Kailani, Akram.
Kailani, Saadi (Shami Pir).
Khankan, Rif'at.
Khoja, Hamid.
Mansarani, Abdul Hadi Ben Abdullah.
Maloyan, Hrant, Colonel.
Mohomet, Said Agha al.
Naili, Assim.
Qudmani, Abdul Ghani.
Sebai, Hani Ben Gehab.
Sebai, Sheikh Mustafa al.
Sharabati, Ahmed.
Yaziji, Toufiq.

I am indebted for the compilation of the present report to Mr. Weld Forester, lately His Majesty's Consul at Damascus, who has been assisted by the oriental secretary.

I have, &c.
H. M. EYRES.

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122. Sebai, Hani Ben Gehab.
123. Sebai, Sheikh Mustafa al.
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138. Zain ed Din, Farid.

1. Abbas, Munir.

Born about 1905. Of good Alawite family. Brother of Shawkat Abbas, Mohafiz of Alawites. Well educated in France (law). Minister of Public Works and of Posts and Telegraphs in Hassan al Hakim Government (September 1941 to April 1942), again in Husni Barazi Government (April 1942 to January 1943) and again in Jamil Ulshi Government (January 1943 to March 1943). Deputy for Safita 1943. Very intelligent and has for some years actively intrigued against the Central Government. Is considered by the National bloc to be a French stooge and is consequently *persona ingratisima*. He very rarely attends the Chamber of Deputies.

2. Abbas, Shawkat.

Born about 1905. Alawite. Son of Jabir al Abbas, head of Khayatin tribe, and brother of Munir Abbas (q.v.). Educated in Syria and in France. In October 1937, when the Alawite Mohafazat was first represented in the Syrian Parliament, was Deputy for Tal Kallakh. On the fall of the Nationalist Government and the return of autonomy to the Jebel Alawite (1939) became Mohafiz of Alawite Province. Quarrelled with Free French in 1941 and was sent into *résidence forcée* in the Lebanon with his Director of the Interior, Ali el Kinj (q.v.). His brother Munir made Shawkat's reinstatement one of the conditions of his joining Sheikh Taj ed Din's first Government in September 1941. Played leading part in negotiations which led to reincorporation of Alawite Mohafazat in Syrian Republic (January 1942). His support of Suleiman Murshid (q.v.) led him into conflict with the British authorities 1943: was placed *en disponibilité* until June 1945, when he was retired on pension. Well educated, intelligent, supple, hard-working and capable, but was said to use his position as Mohafiz for the benefit of himself and his family. Co-operated with Allies in wheat matters. Speaks excellent French.

3. Aboucher, Suleyman Sylvania

Born Damascus about 1890. Greek Orthodox. Received his secondary education as a civil engineer in Louvain, Belgium. Has had experience in Mexico. Chief engineer of the Public Works Department, South Syria, transferred August 1944 as Inspector of Public Works. Speaks French and English. Intelligent, capable, straight. Is interested in farming and in the glass and sugar industries. Hot-tempered and dislikes being contradicted. Co-operated fully with British army on their arrival in Syria.

4. Ahmed, Mohamet Suleiman al

Alawite. An Arab poet known as "Badawi of Jebel" is now a Nationalist in politics. He was at first a Separatist and secretary to Ali Kinj in the Department of the Interior in the Jebel Alawite, but, quarrelling with the French over their administration, became a Nationalist member of Syrian Parliament for Baniyas, 1937. Went to Iraq

in 1939 as professor of Arabic. Violently anti-French and believed to have supported Rashid Ali Keilani against the British. Returned to Syria in 1941 and was elected Deputy for the Caza of Latakia 1943 and Secretary of Chamber of Deputies.

5. Aidi, Abdul Kerim

Born 1908. Educated in Damascus, but while still a student was sentenced to five years' imprisonment following the Crane Commission incidents and fled to Transjordan, where he met King Ali, whom he accompanied to the Hadjaz. Returned to Damascus in 1927: principal of the Umayyeh College 1929-39. Fled to Bagdad to escape arrest by the French, but returned in 1941. Kaimakan of Douma 1943-45. Director of Police, Damascus, April 1945 to May 1946, during which period he was on very friendly terms with the officers of the British Military Security Mission and proved very co-operative. A leading member of the League of National Action and, consequently, works in close harmony with the President and the National bloc. He is a close personal friend of the President.

6. Ajlani, Munir

Son of Darwish Ajlani. Born Damascus 1910. Studied in France, where he graduated as doctor of law. Author of a book on Syrian Constitution. Elected Deputy 1938. At outset of Nationalist régime he, with Seif ed Din Ma'moun, Ahmad Samman and Mohamed Sarraj, organised the "Iron Shirts" (an organisation based on Nazi Brown Shirts) and was one of the commanders until it was taken over by Nizhat Mansuk 1937. Soon after, movement was suppressed by French following disorders in Aleppo and Latakia.

Although his age had been amended by Nationalists to enable him to become Deputy (minimum 30), he bitterly opposed Nationalists in Parliament. In 1938 he and Zeki el Khatib were arrested and tried for writing a manifesto attacking Nationalist Government but were acquitted.

When Dr. Shalbandar returned to Syria, Ajlani supported him and remained one of his intimates until Shalbandar's murder in July 1940, when he gradually ceased his connexion with the party.

In September 1941 he was appointed head of Sheikh Taj ed Din's secretariat, and when on 17th April, 1942, Cabinet was reshuffled Sheikh Taj made him Minister of newly created Ministry of Youth and Propaganda in the Government of Husni Barazi. Was a member of Jamil Ulshi's Government (January 1943 to March 1943), occupying the same Ministry, the name of which was changed to Ministry of Social Affairs (January 1943). Married on 20th August, 1942, the daughter of Sheikh Taj. Appointed lecturer in Roman law at Damascus University, March 1943. Failed in elections 1943, has recently become a prominent member of the Liberal Union Association (Munazzamat Ittihad al Ahrar).

Conceited and ruthless individual, vacillating yet obstinate. Is considered a good speaker by Arabs.

7. Akras, Michel

Maronite Archbishop of Aleppo. Born 1877. Educated in the Maronite College at Beirut. Concealed British Consulate archives during the war of 1914-18. Probably the most sincere prelate in the Aleppo area, but neither his health nor influence is strong now. He hopes for the continuance of European influence in Syria.

8. Alexandros III, Takhan

Born in Damascus in 1869, where he was educated in the Greek Orthodox School. His brilliance and his steadiness led to his being sent to the Ecclesiastical College in Constantinople. In 1894 he returned to Damascus and two years later went to the religious academy in Kiev. Studied for a few years in Moscow. In 1903 he was appointed Bishop of Adana and Tarsus, but was badly received by the population there and resigned in 1906. In 1908 he was appointed Bishop of Tripoli and remained there until 1930, when he was elected Patriarch of Damascus by the Damascus electors but not by other members of the electoral college, who elected Arsanios, Bishop of Latakia. A schism resulted and the three other patriarchs (Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem) sent representatives to conduct an enquiry into the election. They finally gave their opinion in favour of Alexandros. The schism, however, persisted until the death of Arsanios in 1932. Alexandros has been criticised for his weak handling of the Epiphanius revolt in 1935, which resulted in the formation of an independent church in Latakia in 1938. This independent community existed until 1939, when the French High Commissioner threatened to declare it illegal. Since that date Epiphanius and the Patriarch have been reconciled. The Italian attack on Greece in 1940 brought Alexandros into the open as an outspoken supporter of the Greek cause in spite of the presence in Syria of an Italian Armistice Commission and in spite of the pro-Axis leanings of the French Vichy authorities. As he supported the Greeks, so he supported the Allied cause under the same circumstances. The traditional Russian support enjoyed by the Orthodox Church in Syria having ceased in 1917, the Orthodox community under Alexandros has drawn nearer to the Muslim Syrian Government and, on the whole, further away from the Latin Christian community which has enjoyed the protection of the French Mandate. Alexandros maintains relations with the Anglican Church both in Jerusalem and in England. When the Government of the U.S.S.R. acknowledged the Russian Orthodox Church in 1941-42 he began a correspondence with the Patriarch Sergei, and attended the election ceremonies in Moscow of the Patriarch in January 1945. Does not interfere in politics, but is known to fear that present Nationalist régime may harm the interests of the Christian minorities. Pleasant and cultivated.

9. Anbari, Colonel Tahsin

Born in Damascus about 1895. Educated in the Military School of Constantinople. Served in Syrian Gendarmerie, in which he rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel under the French Gendarmerie Mission. In June 1941, just before the withdrawal of the Vichy French, was appointed Director of Security. Appointed Acting Director of the Police in September 1941 under the Sheikh Taj régime; and later Director-General of the Gendarmerie with rank of colonel. A capable man, though it is almost certain that he took advantage of his situation to make money by illegal methods, possibly in collaboration with the President of the Republic. The Government of Ata el Ayoubi, for political reasons and for his racketeering, removed him from

his position in the gendarmerie and gave him the sinecure of Director-General in the Ministry of Defence (March 1943). Appointed November 1945 head of the board dealing with military supplies at Ministry of Defence. He considers himself technically senior in rank to Colonel Abdullah el Atfeh, Commander of the Syrian Army, and this leads to friction and jealousy.

10. Antaki, Naim

Born Aleppo 1900. Educated in American University, Beirut. Greek Orthodox. A lawyer, he formerly worked with Maître Louis Zaidé and was at one time Dean of the Order of Barristers at Aleppo. Has visited India. Secretary to the Syrian delegation in Paris for the conclusion of the Franco-Syrian Treaty. On his return he became, in July 1937, Director for Foreign Affairs, but resigned in December 1937, being dissatisfied with the way in which he was ignored by his Moslem colleagues whenever important decisions were to be taken. Took no part in politics from fall of Nationalist Government (1939) until selected as Minister for Provisional Government of Ata Bey Ayoubi, in which he held Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Works (March 1943-August 1943). Elected Deputy for Damascus, whither he had officially transferred his domicile, in 1943, but for many months took no active part in politics as a result of temporary loss of eyesight through overwork. Minister of Finance, April 1945 to August, in Fares Khouri's second Government (q.v.); member of Syrian delegation to United Nations Conference in San Francisco, April 1945, Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Public Works in Saadullah Jabri's Government (q.v.), September 1945, but resigned December 1945. Is lawyer of Syrian Petroleum Company and of Syrian Bank. Formerly an ardent Nationalist, his views are now considerably more moderate although he retains his great admiration and friendship for Jamil Mardam. Very well educated, a tremendous worker and straightforward and sincere. Well disposed towards British. Speaks English and French.

11. Aphram I, Mar Ignatius; Barsam

Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) Patriarch of Antioch. Born 1894. Educated by the Dominicans at Mosul and received into the Roman Catholic Communion. Subsequently reverted to his original Church and was ordained in it. Became Patriarch with residence at Homs 1932. His community extends over the Middle East and India (whence he draws considerable funds). Very aware of his own importance and that of his Church. Like most Levant churchmen, mingles politics with religion.

12. Armanazi, Najib

Born about 1900. From Hama. Dosteur en Droit ("à titre d'étranger") of Paris. Was private secretary to President Abed, and so anathema to Taj ed Din, who persuaded de Martel to oblige Abed to get rid of him. Now 100 per cent. Nationalist. Appointed private secretary to President Atassi in 1937. On the resignation of President Atassi (July 1939) remained unemployed until appointed Secretary-General to President Quwatli, August 1943. Is brother-in-law of Jamil Mardam Bey, with whom, however, he is not on good terms. Appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain, Poland and Czechoslovakia, January 1945. Syrian representative on Preliminary Committee for United Nations Organisation and member of Syrian delegation to United Nations Organisation meeting in London, November 1945. He is not generally considered to have made a success of his mission, and reports have reached the Syrian Government that

he spends too much of his time in London with women.

13. Arna'ut, Ma'Aruf

Born about 1895. Owner and editor of Damascus daily newspaper *Fala al Arab*. Member of the Arab Academy of Damascus, and author of various works on early Arab history, notably a life of the Prophet. Has been subsidised for some years by Nuri Pasha Saïd of Iraq and, for that reason, backs him. For same reason was pro-Allied, and is a supporter of the Hashemite family. Member of journalist delegation which visited London as guests of His Majesty's Government in July 1945.

14. Arslan, Amir Adel

Born about 1890. A Druse from the Lebanon (brother of Shekib Arslan, q.v.). Was pro-Turk in the War of 1914-18 and held a Kaimakamship in the Lebanon. Member of the Party of Independence 1919-20. Took an active part in the rebellion of 1925-26 and was condemned to death by the French. Amnestied in 1937. Expelled from Egypt in 1931 after anti-Italian agitations; lived for some years in Iraq. Accompanied Syrian Prime Minister to Paris in 1937 to discuss ratification of Franco-Syrian Treaty, and subsequently returned to Syria, where he received a warm welcome. Has several times visited the United Kingdom, where he has business interests and where he was connected with Arab centre. Figured on the Palestine Black List (1937 and 1939). Worked with von Hentig and Roser from beginning of year 1941 to arrival of Allies in Syria, June 1941, when he fled to Turkey, where he is believed to have maintained contact with Syria. Is stated to have tried to put Druzes against Allies. In October 1941 became head of "Free Syrian Government" created by Vichy. Returned to Syria after the intervention of the President of the Republic in 1945 with the Allied Security authorities; appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Brazil January 1946 but did not proceed. Minister of Education in Saadullah Jabri's third Government June 1946.

15. Arslan, Amir Shekib

Born about 1882. A Druse. Brother of Adel (q.v.). Was a Kaimakam of the Shouf in Lebanon during the war of 1914-18. Collected £700 for war fund of General Officer Commanding, Damascus. Proposed the disarmament of the Maronites. Wrote violent anti-British articles in the *Sharq* newspaper of Damascus. Is credited with recommending to Jemal Pasha the hanging of the Syrian Nationalists. Was condemned to death by French court-martial for participation in 1925-26 rebellion. Fled to Palestine and then to Switzerland, where he was Italian agent and propagandist. Purged in April 1937 and returned to Syria. Took active part in Bludan Conference, September 1937. During the Abyssinian war was bought entirely by Italian Intelligence Service. Figured on the Palestine Black List. Appointed Dean of the Arab Academy in Damascus in 1938. In September 1939 went to Berlin to help German propaganda in Arab countries. Has not yet returned to Syria.

16. Assali, Sabri

Born Damascus 1901. Sunni Moslem. Took law degree in University of Damascus. Being of Nationalist outlook, joined Nationalist Youth Movement and became its leader in 1940. Active in formation and control of Iron Shirts Movement until 1937, when it was disbanded. Joined up with Shukri Quwatli's Istiklal Party and became his principal lieutenant in 1940. Under Vichy régime was anti-Allied and organised in May 1941 Committee for Defence of Iraq (i.e., pro-Rashid Ali).

Arrested by Allies in February 1941 and interned at Rashaya. Released March 1943 and elected Deputy for Damascus. Is a leading member of the League of National Action which exercises considerable influence in Damascus and on which the President of the Republic places considerable reliance.

Minister of Interior in Fares Khouri's second Government (q.v.) April to August 1945. Minister of Justice in Fares Khouri's third Government August-September 1945. Minister of Justice and acting Minister of Education in Saadullah Jabri's second Government September 1945 to April 1946. Minister of Interior and Minister of Health in Saadullah Jabri's third Government April 1946. As Minister of Interior has shown himself ready to take strong action to prevent disorders and to suppress anti-Government activity. He is unmarried, and drinks and gambles heavily.

17. Assioun, Fathalla

Born 1899. Educated at the Frères School and the French School of Law, Aleppo. A well-known Aleppo lawyer of the Armenian Catholic Community. A moderate member of the National bloc and a supporter of Saadullah Jabri. Deputy for Aleppo in 1936 and again in 1943. On the resignation of Naim Antaki (q.v.) from Saadullah Bey's second Government was appointed Minister of Public Works January 1946. A somewhat colourless individual with a reputation for probity and high principles.

18. Atassi, Adnam

Born Homs about 1905. Sunni Moslem. Son of Hashem Atassi (q.v.). Lawyer. During Nationalist Government was appointed Syrian Vice-Consul and attached for instruction to French Consulate, Istanbul. Married Turkish woman. Elected Deputy for Homs 1943 and President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Syrian Chamber. Minister Plenipotentiary to France and Belgium January 1945. Represented Syrian Chamber of Deputies at the International Parliamentary Conference at Geneva, September 1945. At one time suspected of pro-Axis activities and was known to be in frequent contact with the Grand Mufti during the latter's residence at Versailles. Intelligent and well educated but weak personality.

19. Atassi, Feidi

Born about 1905. Son of former Mufti of Homs and cousin of Hashem al Atassi (q.v.). Educated in France (law). Had no political career but was Chief of Municipality of Homs. Became Minister of Education in the Hassan al Hakim Government on its formation in September 1941, but resigned early in March 1942 in jigue. Chosen to be Minister of Justice, Education, Social Affairs in Provisional Government of Ata Bey Ayoubi (March 1943-August 1943). Weak character and very boastful, being over proud of his education. Has returned to his permanent job as Head of the Municipality Homs.

20. Atassi, Hashem al

Born about 1865. Good landed family. Prime Minister and President of the Constituent Assembly under Feisal, and President of the Constituent Assembly of 1928. Went to Mecca to be one of the three mediators in conflict between Imam Y shya and Ibn Saud. Succeeded Hanano as leader of the Syrian Nationalist bloc in January 1930. Led the Syrian delegation that went to Paris in March 1936 to negotiate a Franco-Syrian treaty after the disturbances of January-March 1936. A Nationalist who tempers courage with discretion. With the

Syrian delegation in Paris his moderating and soothing influence was of great assistance to the successful conclusion of the treaty negotiations. Elected President of the Syrian Republic 21st December, 1936. On his election as President he resigned the leadership of the Nationalist Party, which was taken over by Shukri Quwatli. As President showed the same dignified tact and restraining influence as he had done during the treaty negotiations. His influence over the Nationalist Party grew less, however, as the Nationalist Government took the bit more firmly between its teeth. Resigned with the fall of the Nationalist Government on 7th July, 1939, and retired to his property at Hama, where he had built himself a pleasant villa during his tenure of office. Had conversations with General Dentz about resuming office in March 1941 and with General Catroux in September 1941 and again in March 1943, but on each occasion without result. He has remained on his property ever since, not participating in 1943 elections nor standing for the presidency. He is regarded as a respectable old man of moderate opinions, but somewhat *passé*. A figure-head rather than a leader.

21. *Atfeh, Abdullah*

Born about 1897. Lieutenant Ottoman Military College 1916, taking part in 1914-18 war; served in Arab army during Feisal's régime 1918-21; joined *Troupes Spéciales* January 1921; went to Paris in an infantry brigade; stationed at Strasbourg for a year; promoted to rank of major, June 1933, and appointed Officer Commanding of 5th Battalion *Troupes Spéciales*, Latakia. Attended French Staff College 1936-38; served on the General Staff in Beirut and Damascus; promoted to rank of lieutenant-colonel June 1941. Seconded to Syrian Government as Director-General of National Defence 1941; Chief of Staff, Deir-*ez-Zor*, 1942; Officer Commanding of Coastal Defence 1942-43; Officer Commanding 5th Brigade, January 1944. Promoted to rank of full colonel and appointed Director-General of Syrian Gendarmerie, June to August 1945; appointed Chief of Staff of Syrian army, August 1945.

He possesses on paper high military qualifications, but is somewhat eccentric and very deaf. The Syrian Government have some evidence to show that he still retains contacts with the French authorities in Beirut. Might well have sat for the original of Low's Colonel Blimp.

22. *Atrash, Amir Hassan al*

Born about 1908. Head of the House of *Aéré*, the leading house of the *Atrash* family. Was *Mohafiz* of *Jebel Druse* until he was appointed Minister of Defence in Husni Barazi's Government (April 1942 to January 1943), taking the place occupied by his uncle, Abdul Ghaffar Pasha, until the old man's death in March 1942. Was again Minister of Defence in Jamil Ushli's Government (January 1943 to March 1943). Deputy for *Sausida* 1943 and president of Defence Committee of Syrian Chamber. Reappointed *Mohafiz* of *Jebel Druse* (April 1943) and resigned from the Chamber. The full integration of *Jebel Druse* in the Syrian Republic in 1945 was largely due to his influence. In May 1946 he sponsored the mutiny of the *Groupement Druse* against their French officers and *n.c.o.s.*, to whom he gave sanctuary in his house. He considers that the Syrian Government are not sufficiently appreciative of the "leading rôle" the *Druse* have played both in 1925 and 1945 against the French. *Amir Hassan* is a typical *Druse*. He is ill-educated, stubborn, ambitious andavaricious. Despite his pretence of being pro-British, he did nothing to help the Allies during the Syrian campaign: and nothing

to hinder. He can, however, sometimes be "jollied" into favourable action. Has flirted with Nationalists and with the French, and now makes no secret of his close contact with King Abdullah.

23. *Atrash, Soltan Bin Hamud Pasha el*

Born about 1875. (Soltan is a name, not a title.) Family originally from *Rashaya*, migrated to *Jebel Druse* in 1860's and became paramount *Druse* family there. Soltan is the head of the *Kraive* house, which is junior to the *Aéré* house, headed by Emir Hassan (*q.v.*). Under the Turks, Soltan adopted wary tactics and avoided a conflict. In 1925-26 took a leading part in the *Druse* revolt and became a centre round which the various insurgent leaders moved. When the revolt was crushed Soltan Pasha fled to *Transjordan* with his closest adviser, the Christian *Oqla Qutami* (*q.v.*). There he found sanctuary, although condemned to death in absence by French court-martial. In 1937 returned to the *Jebel* but took no active part in politics, leaving Emir Hassan to dominate the *Jebel*. He retired to *Kraive*, content to live on his past glory, which remains considerable. During the campaign of 1941 took no part. In March 1942, after the death of Abdul Ghaffar Pasha el *Atrash*, at that time Minister of National Defence, was offered the Ministry of Defence, but refused it. Soltan Pasha and *Oqla Qutami* were awarded pensions for life by the Syrian Government as patriots and heroes of 1925-26 revolt. Ill-educated, of small intelligence and with a reputation for meanness, he is crafty, and managed to inspire in the insurgents of 1925 confidence in his leadership. He remains the most important *Druse*. Is inclined to be pro-British and was anti-French. He feels, however, that the British let him down, as they told him not to intrigue against the Fighting French (and he abstained from doing so), but allowed the French to intrigue against him, undermining his influence in the *Jebel Druse*.

During the past year he has on several occasions openly showed his dissatisfaction with the Damascus Government on the grounds that insufficient deference is paid to him and his past record.

24. *Ayesh, Haj Mohamed el*

Born about 1895. Sunni Muslim. Prominent landowner and merchant of *Deir ez Zor*. No political career and was formerly well-disposed towards the French. Good reputation in his district for honesty. Became Minister of National Economy in Hassan al Hakim's Government (September 1941 to April 1942), and again in Husni Barazi's Government (April 1942 to January 1943); again in Jamil Ushli's Government (January 1943 to March 1943), when he showed goodwill in negotiations concerning the British-Syrian Petroleum Company. Elected Deputy for *Deir ez Zor* 1943 and Vice-President of Chamber. Not very intelligent, but shrewd. Not interested in politics, and spends lot of time in his district.

25. *Ayoubi, Ali*

Born 1920. Son of *Ata Ayoubi*, educated at French schools and A.U.B. Head of *Batoning* Department, August 1941-August 1943. Secretary to Director-General of *Ravitaillement*, August 1943 to December 1944, during which period he was suspected of racketeering pretty successfully. Appointed head of Syrian Security Service, July 1943, and, about the same time, married (much against the wishes of his family) a Polish refugee girl who had come to Syria as children's nurse in a French family. He rather surprisingly took his new appointment with great seriousness and has shown himself genuinely desirous of raising the

standard of the Department. His marriage has proved a success and seems to have steadied him. He co-operated closely with British military authorities until their evacuation in April 1946. Does not belong to any political party and has taken no part in politics.

26. *Azm, Bedih Bey*

Born about 1900 in *Hama*. *Bon vicar* and sportsman, both popular and generous. Does not mix in politics, but is very wealthy and influential financially. Has no high order of intelligence and has the character of an amiable bandit. Lives a life of sport, drinking and gambling. During election troubles and strikes he organises the *Azm* bands of ruffians who protect and promote the family interests.

27. *Azm, Khaled al*

Born about 1900. Son of Mohamed Pasha al *Azm*. Did not at first take an active part in politics, except an occasional intervention in agricultural matters. Member of the Municipal Council. Managing director of the National Cement Factory. Appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Justice in the Bukhari Cabinet, March to May 1939.

Under the influence of the Italian Disarmament Commission, was appointed by Vichy French (General Dentz) on 2nd April, 1941, as "Chief d'Etat" and Minister of Interior. His régime lasted until September 1941, when it was replaced by "Independent" Syrian Government with Shaukh Taj ed Din as President. During Syrian campaign he collaborated closely with Vichy French to preserve order in Damascus. During whole period of office he showed himself to be under the influence of the Nationalists—especially of Shukri Quwatli. Deputy for Damascus 1943 and Minister of Finance in Saadullah Jabri's Government (August 1943-October 1944). Minister of Finance and *Ravitaillement* in Fares Khouri's first Government October 1944 to April 1945. Minister of Finance and Defence in Fares Khouri's third Government August to September 1945. Minister of National Economy and Justice in Saadullah Jabri's third Government, April 1946.

A rich landowner, very pompous and overbearing. A bit of a bully, but like all bullies, if stood up to, caves in. He is intelligent and well-educated and more widely read and has wider interests than most of his compatriots. Has now ambitions to become President of the Republic, but might be seriously handicapped in this by his present wife, a coarse merry woman of no family whom he keeps heavily veiled mainly because he is afraid lest she make some serious social gaffe. Suspected at one time of pro-German sympathies, but probably incorrectly; he has recently shown himself ready to co-operate with the British.

28. *Azmeh, Adil al*

Born about 1882. A diplomé of the Turkish School of Law. Whilst a political refugee in *Transjordan* he formed with his brother, Nabih al *Azmeh* (*q.v.*), the "Istiqlal Party," whose first objective was the expulsion of the French from Syria. During the 1925-26 revolt in Syria he collected, as treasurer of his party, large sums of money from Palestine, *Transjordan* and other countries. After keeping more than half himself, he provided the rebels in Syria with money and arms on a considerable scale. His flagrant abuse of British political asylum earned him a contemptuous condemnation by French court-martial. He was included in the general amnesty of 1937. On his return he was acclaimed as a great

patriot and given high office in the Ministry of Interior by Nationalists in return for forming "Istiqlal Party." Back in Syria he used his influence to repay the consideration he had received from the British authorities in *Transjordan* and Palestine by facilitating the supply of arms and ammunition to the rebels in Palestine during the disturbances of 1936 and in 1937 in going a step further in employing the Syrian Government machinery, from his key position in the Ministry of the Interior, to assist the recruitment of bandits in Syria for thuggery in Palestine. On the fall of the Nationalist Government in the spring of 1939 he proceeded on leave to Iraq, where he built a cinema with his ill-gotten gains. In his absence (April 1940) he was condemned to twenty years' imprisonment for conspiring to overthrow the Council of Directors (July 1939). In collaboration with Haj Amin Hussaini is believed to have had a part in the Iraq rising (May 1941) and fled to Turkey, from where he returned clandestinely early in 1946. Appointed *Mohafiz* of *Alouite* *Mohafazat* June 1946. An unscrupulous political adventurer.

29. *Azmeh, Nabih al*

Born about 1888. Brother of Adil al *Azmeh* (*q.v.*). Graduated from Turkish Military Academy in 1900. His advance in Turkish army was slow, as he was only a lieutenant when the war broke out in 1914. Was taken prisoner by British forces in 1916, but obtained his release to join the Amir Faisal's followers, where, like the Duke of Plaza Toro, he led from the rear. When Faisal was placed in charge of the "Occupied Enemy Territory East" he was made Chief of Police, Aleppo, but fled Syria on the French occupation in 1920. He was made welcome by the Emir Abdullah as a political refugee. He and his brother formed the "Istiqlal Party" in *Transjordan*. This led to his banishment, and he went to the *Hedjaz*, then to Egypt and so to Palestine, where he continued to foment trouble in Syria. He was one of the first of the Syrians arrested in the general amnesty of 1937 to return to Damascus. In August and September 1937, under the direction of the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al Hussaini, and in concert with the Palestinian, Muin al Madi, he organised the anti-British pan-Arab Congress of *Bludan*. In an astonishingly short time he considerably enriched himself from the subscriptions obtained by the "Palestine Defence Committee," of which he was prominent member. In December 1938 used his influence to try to create trouble for the French, and was implicated in plot against the "security of State," for which he was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment and twenty years' banishment. Amnestied November 1940 at instigation of Italian Armistice Commission. Renewed his interest in politics (especially with Shukri Quwatli) and in May 1941 became member of a committee to send recruits and money to Iraq, against British. Fled to Turkey during Syrian campaign from where he returned clandestinely early in 1946 claiming President Quwatli's protection. He immediately made his house a centre for Palestinian politics and began an attempt to rejuvenate the "Istiqlal Party" of which the President of the Republic was a leading member. He was twice proposed for Cabinet appointments but after representations by His Majesty's Legation the suggestions were dropped. In April 1946 was appointed Minister of Defence in Saadullah Jabri's third Government when His Majesty's Minister was again consulted but raised no objection. Resigned June 1946 after a series of disagreements with his colleagues.

A thoroughly contemptible rascal, who has betrayed his friends one after another.

30. *Babil, Nassouh*

Born Damascus about 1905, of obscure parentage. Arrested with Ajlani (q.v.) in 1938 for his support of Shalhbandar against Mardam. Remained supporter of Dr. Shalhbandar until latter was assassinated in July 1940, when he and Fuad Qodmani became leaders of Shalhbandar Party. He and his party failed in 1943 elections and the party disintegrated. He is proprietor of the important Damascus newspaper *El Aymn* and President of the Press Syndicate. Came under suspicion of the Syrian Government of being in touch with the French regarding the setting up of a quisling Government during the bombardment of Damascus in May 1945.

A clever individual of no principle.

31. *Bagdash, Khaled*

Born about 1910 in Damascus, of Kurdish origin of a family named Kutrash, Sunni Moslem. Educated in Damascus, where he studied philosophy. Became secretary of Communist Party in Damascus, 1928. The Communist Party was persecuted by the French and in 1934, following the distribution of Communist leaflets, was suppressed, Bagdash being condemned to several years' imprisonment. He escaped to Russia, where he attended the Oriental School of Propaganda. He now claims that, while in Russia, he met Stalin. In 1936 went to Paris and obtained a special amnesty through the Syrian delegation which was negotiating the Franco-Syrian Treaty. Returned to Syria in January 1937 and resumed leadership of the Communist Party. Again went into hiding in Damascus at the outbreak of war when Communist Party was suppressed, remaining there until Germany attacked Russia (June 1941). After attempts to reach an understanding with Shukri Quwatli (q.v.) by which he should be included on the latter's electoral list in 1943, Bagdash stood as an independent candidate and failed. Since then he has devoted his energies to organising the activities of the Communist Party and is known to be in constant touch with members of the Soviet Legation. Stated to be owner of Communist paper *Sa'at ash Shaub*, of Beirut. Popular among the working classes and a good speaker. Said to receive substantial subsidies from Russia. Speaks Arabic, Kurdish, Russian, French. Ambitious, and prepared to make trouble.

32. *Bakri, Fauzi el*

Born Damascus about 1880. Sunni Moslem. Eldest son of late Ats Bey el Bakri. Landed family claiming descent from second Caliph. There is also a closely-related branch of the family in Egypt. Has brothers Nassib, Sami, Beshir, Mazhar (q.v.) and Khair ed Din and sons Assad and Baha ed Din.

Fauzi was president of the Arab Club, Damascus, in Ottoman days and was condemned to death (in absentia) by Turkish court-martial for desertion in 1916. In 1917 joined the Arab revolt in the Hijaz, but does not seem to have played a prominent part. After Faisal's arrival in Damascus Fauzi became an official there. Took a leading part in the revolt of 1925 and was condemned to death. Amnestied 1928 at request of Shaikh Taj ed Din. Failed at 1932 elections and has not since been politically active.

The Bakris, having lost most of their wealth, have tried to retain their influence by placing one member of the family in each political camp. This policy has not served them well, as it has raised suspicions on all sides.

Left for Egypt for duration of war (January 1943) in order "to avoid complications for himself and Allies."

Is a stupid man and it seems unlikely that he will ever figure largely in politics again, though he has taken some part during 1945 in monarchist activities in Syria.

33. *Bakri, Mazhar*

Sunni Moslem, born about 1900; brother of Fauzi Bakri. At the age of 14 fled from Damascus to join with his brothers the Arab revolt against the Turks. Studied agriculture in France 1919-24 and travelled extensively in Europe. In 1925 was condemned to death by the French for his part in the revolution but was later pardoned and with his brothers led the Mujahidanes Party. In 1932-36 was Director-General of a section of the Ministry of Finance, 1937 Director-General of Police and December 1944 was appointed Mohafiz of Damascus.

He has consistently worked for Syrian independence, but at present takes no active part in politics.

Is a popular and hard-working man and well-disposed towards the British. An agreeable and cultivated person.

34. *Barazi, Husni*

Born about 1882. Son of Sulaiman Agha Barazi, a rich landed Kurdish family of Hama, Minister of the Interior under Damad, 1926. Deported on suspicion of assisting rebels in July 1926. Member of Constituent Assembly, 1928. Opposed by Nationalists in elections of 1932 and was not elected. He was, however, appointed Minister of Education in Taj ed Din's Government in March 1934, and resigned with Shaikh Taj in February 1935. Appointed Mohafiz of Alexandretta in January 1937. He sought to prove his attachment to his new Nationalist masters by intriguing with the Arab parties in the Sanjak against the Turks and the Mandatory, but was ejected in November 1937. Appointed Mohafiz of Damascus in March 1942. On fall of Hassan el Halki Government (April 1942) was appointed by Shaikh Taj ed Din President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of the Interior. Succeeded Faiz Khouri as President of the Commission Supérieure of the Wheat Office, in which capacity he promised to secure large quantities of wheat, but did not succeed. Quarrelled with Shaikh Taj ed Din, posing as Syrian patriot, thinking he had the support of his colleagues. Matters came to a head in January 1943, when all his colleagues resigned and he was obliged to retire.

A man of some strength of character, but devoid of morals. Intriguer, and accused in the past of trafficking in Hashish. Until he assumed office was heavily in debt. Before the visit to Syria of the Anglo-American Commission of Enquiry on Palestine in 1946 he volunteered to His Majesty's Consul, Damascus, to testify before the commission in favour of the Jews.

35. *Barazi, Muhson*

Born about 1900. A Kurd of Hama. Educated in France. Professor at School of Law and later (1941) Dean. Appointed Minister of Education in Khalid al Azm Government (April to September 1941). Appointed member of Higher Committee for the Administration of the Funds of Common Interest, January 1944, and Secretary-General to the Presidency, February 1945. He is well educated, takes an intelligent interest in world problems and has shown himself receptive of ideas and reasonable in discussion. He does not conceal that he would prefer some educational or literary activity to politics. Recently has shown himself to be well-disposed towards the British.

36. *Barazi, Munir Khalid*

Born about 1890. Landowner of Hama. Ex-President of the Municipality, from which he was ousted by Husni Barazi (q.v.) when the latter became Prime Minister, and is consequently his bitter enemy. In politics he was a blatant French spy and, whether inspired or not, an *agent provocateur*. He offered, however, to work closely with the British authorities and to do pro-British propaganda and he pays lip-service to the National bloc. Again became President of the Hama Municipality in 1943 and, in spite of his many enemies, has succeeded in holding the post since then. Is reliably believed to have murdered his own sister some years ago in order to get her share of the family inheritance.

37. *Barazi, Najib Agha*

Born Hama about 1885. Wealthy landowner and head of Barazi family, who are of Kurdish origin. Leader of Nationalist bloc in Hama and Deputy in 1936 and again in 1943, Vice-President of Syrian Chamber of Deputies 1944-45. Most influential man in Hama, but unpopular. Strong character and very ambitious. Cunning, polished, but not well educated. Opponent of Husni Barazi (q.v.).

38. *Barudi, Fakhri*

Born Damascus 1893. Aide-de-camp to King Feisal in Damascus. First became prominent in revolt of 1925, in which he took an active part. Elected Nationalist Deputy in 1932 and again in 1936. In 1936 he was Inspector-General of Iron Shirts, a Nazi-inspired youth formation. Exiled for a short period by French for his share in 1936 troubles. Pled to Transjordan in 1939 after discovery of "plot against security of State" and kept a low coffee-house in Amman until he returned to Damascus in May 1941 after formation of Khalid el Azm Government. Elected Deputy at a by-election in Damascus (October 1943).

Was bitterly anti-French. Poses as an ardent Nationalist, but is a bit of a buffoon and a farceur; consequently nobody really takes him seriously. As head of the National Arab Bureau in 1938-39 actively aided Palestine rebels in propaganda sphere. A noted Arab orator in low-style Arabic, and a heavy drinker. Commonly accused of unnatural vice.

39. *Bukhari, Nassouhi el*

Born about 1884. Ex-Turkish officer. Educated in Constantinople. During 1914-18 war was brigade commander in Turkish army. Captured by Russians on Caucasian front. Escaped from prisoners-of-war camp in Siberia through China. Returned to Turkey via United States and Greece and given command of Turkish division on Palestine front. Went over to British when they occupied Damascus in October 1918. In 1925 appointed Minister of Agriculture in the Damad's Government. In 1927 took office as Minister of Education. Formed neutral Government with himself as Prime Minister in March 1939, but was dismissed by French in May 1939 as a preliminary to the appointment of the Council of Directors (July 1939). Deputy for Damascus 1943 and appointed Minister of Education and Defence in Sandullah Jabri's Government (August, 1943-October 1944). Made his acceptance of Ministry of Defence conditional on the taking over of Syrian troops from the French. A man of principle and well respected.

40. *Daham el Hadi, Sheikh*

Born 1895. Bedouin chief and head of the Shammar Khroasa. Disputes the leadership of all the Shammar of Syria with his cousin, Meizar Abdul

Muhsen, who actually heads the Shammar confederation. Also claims hereditary leadership of the Iraqi Shammar, from which he was evicted by the British. He is therefore bitterly jealous of Sheikh Sfook and continually contrives to undermine his position. Appointed Deputy of the Jezirah tribes in 1936. Exiled in 1942 for obstructing road constructions and wheat purchase. In spite of his being in exile, was elected Deputy in 1943 for Jezirah tribes; returned to Syria 1944.

A proud and truculent sheikh, ignorant of his limitations and of world conditions.

41. *Dahr, Haj Sami Sayem al*

Born 1896. Wealthy industrialist and head of a weaving business. President of the Aleppo Chamber of Industry. Contributed largely to the Nationalist Party funds and was treasurer of the funds collected for Palestine, but became discontented with the policy of the Syrian Nationalist Government and resigned from the Nationalist bloc in March 1939. Elected Deputy 1943. Presented the cost of a Spitfire to Royal Air Force (March 1944).

42. *Dandashi, Ali Abdul Karim*

Born 1905 at Tel Kalakh. Member of the Damateh clan. A Sunni Moslem. Studied at the Islamic College in Beirut till 1928. Joined the Scout movement in 1923 and has remained associated with it. In 1937 he took a group of Syrian Scouts to the Jamboree in Holland, travelling by way of the Balkans, Austria and Germany, returning through France and Italy. On this occasion he stayed for some time in Berlin and Potsdam, where he associated with Syrians in Germany, notably one of the Dalati brothers, who are associated with him in the Scout movement. From 1937 has devoted most of his time to scouting and was elected Chief Scout in November 1941. Is associated with the League of National Action, which was founded by his cousin and of which his colleague in the Scout movement, Dr. Roshdi Jabi (q.v.), is leading member. His arrest was ordered by the French in February 1942, but the order was annulled at the end of March, and, shortly after, he paraded at the head of the Scouts at the review of the Syrian gendarmerie.

Dandashi played an important part in the dispute between the Scout movement and the Ministry of Youth and Propaganda under Munir Ajlani (q.v.), opposing Government control of the Scout movement. After the Allied occupation showed himself willing to co-operate and took part with his scouts in passive defence exercises and now holds a leading position in the Fatawwa (Youth Movement). Energetic and a disciplinarian.

43. *Faraj, Bishop Antoine*

Greek Catholic. Born in Damascus in 1885. Appointed patriarchal representative in Egypt in 1922 and in Damascus in 1928. Intelligent intriguer. Rules his flock with a despotic rod. As a Latin, his sentiments have inclined towards Italy, but after the Allied occupation in 1941 he concealed his pro-Italian propensities. When the religious schools were all closed following the events of May 1945 he arranged to accept responsibility for the *Sœurs de Bessemon* (Greek Catholic) school and obtained permission for it to re-open. An arch scrounger.

44. *Faraj Mohamed el Sheikh*

Born about 1895. Leader of the Wulda semi-sedentary tribe on the Euphrates, centring on Raqqa. Is on bad terms with Mujib ibn Mubaid (q.v.) of the Fedaan. Has considerable influence on Abu Shaaban Confederacy (semi-sedentaries). Banished January 1943 for obstruction to road making and to

Allied wheat plan. Allowed to return in January 1945.

Intelligent but inclined to hypocrisy and takes hasty decisions.

45. *Fatuyah, Mohamed al*

Born Deir ez Zor about 1880. Sunni Moslem. Deputy in Istanbul in days of Ottoman Empire. Ex-President of the Municipality of Deir ez Zor. Headed the movement in Deir ez Zor in May 1941 to help Rashid Ali in his revolt by touring the country and trying to send recruits to join the Iraqi army. A former supporter of the Nationalist bloc and was on bad terms with the French, but now leads opposition to the bloc in the Deir ez Zor district.

46. *Fa'ur, Fa'ur Amir*

Born about 1900. Chief of the El Fadl Bedouin (sedentary) near Lake Hula. The lands of his tribe are astride the Syria-Palestine frontier. Sells his lands in Palestine to Jews. Elected Deputy for Kuneitra, December 1936. Strongly suspected of being engaged in smuggling arms and men to Palestine during the disturbances of 1937 to 1939. Was useful to British during and before Syrian campaign (June 1941). Went on pilgrimage to Mecca, winter 1941-42, and, on return, spread pro-Allied propaganda at instance of Ibn Saud. In May 1942 toured Syria with Jamil Shamut, securing the signatures of ex-Deputies to a declaration in favour of the President of the Republic, Sheikh Taj ed Din. Deputy for Kuneitra 1943. Has since joined the supporters of a monarchist régime for Syria under King Abdullah and maintains close contact with Amman. Visited America at the time of the United Nations Conference in San Francisco and spent a month in London on his way back.

A weak and spendthrift individual who has not maintained the renown of his family established by his father. Always playing at politics but with no conviction. Has the ambition to become a Minister. An agreeable but ineffective personality.

47. *Ghazzi, Said al*

Born about 1895. Took law degree in Damascus in 1921. Deputy to the Constituent Assembly 1928, but lost his popularity with the Nationalists by supporting Sheikh Taj ed Din. Pressed for Nationalist participation in 1932 elections. When negotiations with High Commissioner's delegate came to a deadlock (Ihsan Sherif insisting on standing), Said al Ghazzi withdrew his own candidature. Reputation enhanced by not being a party to the subsequent unsuccessful deals with M. Ponsot. Withdrew a second time in favour of Afif el Solh in July by-elections. Included in Ala Bey al Ayyubi's Cabinet as Minister of Justice in March 1936. Refused the post of Mohafiz of Latakia in January 1937. Appointed Director-General of the Ministry of National Economy 1938 and Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs in 1939, but dismissed in 1939. Included on Shakeri Quwatli's list for 1943 election, he polled nearly as many votes as Quwatli himself. In fact, it is almost certain that he polled more votes but the matter was "arranged." Elected vice-president of the Chamber. Minister of Justice and Revitallement in Fares Khouri's second Government, April to August 1945. Good-natured, intelligent, comfortably off. Too colourless to be either useful or dangerous. Of moderate Nationalist tendencies, but dissatisfied with treatment received from that party.

48. *Haffar, Lutf*

Born Damascus 1888 of a family of well-established merchants. Minister of Public Works under

the Duand, 1926, and deported for Nationalist sympathies some months later. Member of the Constituent Assembly, 1928. Accepted post as administrator of Ain Fijeh waterworks, 1931. Deputy in 1932 and again in 1936 when he was elected vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies. Minister of Finance in the second Jamil Mardam Cabinet (July 1937 to February 1939). Prime Minister, 23rd February to 14th March, 1939. Implicated in the murder of Dr. Shuhbandar in July 1940, and fled to Bagdad. Returned to Syria after the charge against him had been dropped and the Government of Directors replaced by the moderate Nationalist Government of Khaled Bey el Azm (q.v.) in April 1941. Deputy for Damascus 1943 and Minister of Interior in Saadullah Jabri's Government (August 1943-October 1944), but resented the latter's interference in his Department. Minister of Interior in Fares Khouri's third Government, August-September 1945. Minister of Interior in Saadullah Jabri's second Government, September 1945 to April 1946. Is interested in the newspaper *Al Iushaa*, which is nominally owned and directed by his cousin, Wajih el Haffar (q.v.).

Not an extreme Nationalist, but has a lengthy record of political activity in connexion with Palestine—assisted Nehib el Azmi to organise the Arab Conference at Bludan in 1935 and is now chairman of the Syrian Committee for the Defence of Palestine. Not a strong personality though an important member of the Nationalist bloc. A good second fiddler. Has lately been suffering from heart trouble.

49. *Hajjo Agha Hassan*

Born about 1898 near Mardin, Turkey. Head of Haverkun tribe of Kurds which moved into Syria about 1922. No specific education, but reads and writes Kurdish, Arabic and Turkish. With his late father took prominent part in Separatist Movement in the Jezirah. Resides at Haasetché. Was pro-Allied and co-operative during the war; elected Deputy for Kamishli 1943, but does not enjoy the confidence of the National bloc owing to his former connexion with the French.

50. *Hakim, Hassan Bey al*

Born Damascus about 1886. Was an Inspector of Finance and later Director of Posts and Telegraphs in Faisal's Syrian Government of 1918-20. He was held responsible for delay in sending off Faisal's reply to General Gouraud's ultimatum in July 1920. (It was the absence of a reply that provided the excuse for General Gouraud to order French troops to advance on Damascus.) Exiled by the French but had fled to Egypt and later went to Iraq. Then he obtained an appointment as manager of the Arab Bank's Jaffa branch. Arrested in 1937, he returned to Damascus and, as a loyal Nationalist, was appointed Director-General of Waki. Minister of Education in Bukhari Cabinet, March to May 1939. Later became Director of Government Agricultural Bank. In September 1941 became President of Council and Minister of Finance in "Independent" Syria under the presidency of Sheikh Taj ed Din, as proclaimed by French. Quarrelled with President over latter's financial requests and with French over non-granting of various concessions of form to independence. Because of his rather stubborn and limited capacity was on bad terms with his colleagues, whom he was unable to pull together. Was undoubtedly pro-British, but was very indiscreet in falling under the influence of unworthy counsellors. He gave his enemies a chance to attack him because he openly proclaimed himself as opposed to the feudal landlords and because, although materially honest, he provoked laws to benefit himself in small ways. In

April 1942 he was forced to resign in rather unpleasant manner, after defying the President, and reverted to former employment as Director of the National (Syrian) Agricultural Bank until July 1944, when he retired. Since then he has criticised the actions of the President of the Republic and the Government in letters and memoranda and has been outspokenly in favour of a Hashimite monarchy in Syria. Applied to visit London at the same time as the Emir Abdullah early in 1946, but was not granted a visa as his visit did not come under any category admissible at the time and it was not considered desirable to make any exception.

51. *Halabi, Fuad*

Born Damascus about 1905. Sunni Moslem. Married to an Atassi of Homs; formerly civil judge in Damascus and Homs. Appointed Acting Mohafiz of Homs 1942, confirmed in October and maintained in office by Saadullah Jabri's Government. Reputed honest as judge, and has shown himself an astute and capable administrator. Since his definite appointment as Mohafiz, however, he has displayed political ambitions, and so has shown himself reluctant to take a strong line when notables are concerned.

52. *Hamzeh, Aref*

Born about 1903. Educated in Damascus. Studied law in the Damascus School of Law. Member of the Court of Appeal, having been appointed to this post in year 1936. Head of the Damascus Municipality in April 1942 until early 1943, when he was appointed Government representative on the Council of State. Organised Damascus Spitfire Fund. Member of a well-known Damascus family claiming descent from the Prophet Mohammed. Popular, pleasant, well-mannered and well educated, but rather weak.

53. *Harb, Nejib*

Born 1910. Education Arabic and a little French. Residence Suweida. Newspaper correspondent. Supports Nationalist bloc and is anti-Arab. Has been imprisoned in the past for being pro-German. Has also in the past had the support of Ali (Imtane) Atrash. Is unreliable and a fisher in troubled waters. Originally from the Lebanon. Came to Mjamer in 1916 and attached himself to the Harb family there. Popular locally and a good speaker. Not well-off. Started a newspaper (*Al Jehel*) in August 1942, under the patronage of the Délégué, Colonel Olive.

54. *Hariri, Mohamed Khetr*

Born about 1900. The most influential sheikh in the Hauran. Considered a large landowner. After the entry of the Allies into Syria he was one of the principal agitators for the co-ordination of the Hauran with Transjordan. During the summer of 1942 he was a leading figure in the move for a Haurani Mohafiz. His name headed the telegram of protestation sent to General Collet on the 20th August, 1942, complaining of Husni Barazi's high-handed method for the collection of wheat. This telegram demanded Barazi's resignation under threat of non-co-operation with the O.C.P. Frequently travels to Damascus, where he has dealings with political personages. Deputy for Ezraa, Hauran, 1943.

Literate, but not educated. Politically conscious, ambitious and willing to run with the hares.

55. *Hatem, Dr. Anwar*

Born 1910. An Alepine Christian educated in France, graduate of law from Paris University. Teacher of French Literature at the Tadjix School, Damascus, 1933-36. Secretary to Prime Minister

1937-39. Assistant Chief of Diwan at Prime Minister's Office 1939-42. Director of Propaganda and Social Affairs April 1942-April 1943. Chief of Service in Prime Minister's Office April 1943-May 1945. Director of Prime Minister's Office May 1945. Appointed Second Counsellor at Ministry for Foreign Affairs March 1946 in addition to his other post. Intelligent and has an accurate idea of the inefficiency of the Syrian Government. A supporter of Jamil Mardam and has frequently shown himself willing to provide information to His Majesty's Legation, but is not entirely trustworthy and inclined to drink over-much.

56. *Hawash, Aziz*

Alawite. Born about 1885. Chief of the Matawirah tribe living at Safita. His family fortunes, never great, have diminished to such an extent that he has to rely on his tribe (which is not rich) for financial support. Commissaire of Police in Beirut under Turkish régime. Resentment of favour shown by French to other Alawite leaders made him throw in his lot with the Nationalist bloc, and he was made Mohafiz of the Hauran (1939) and subsequently of the Damascus province whence he was retired in 1941. Lived in retirement at Safita, and was arrested by the Vichy authorities during the battle of Syria. Later released by Fighting French, who did not, however, regard him as reliable. His attitude to the British was equally unreliable. Arrested and interned (May 1943) for alleged contact with Axis. By many his arrest was regarded as a political move by the French against the Nationalists.

A man of many marriages. Lavish, educated, but of limited intelligence, stubborn, courageous and popular in spite of his poverty.

57. *Hayani, Taufiq*

Sunni Moslem. Born about 1895. From Aleppo. Kaimakam of Douma in 1925 and Governor of Hauran, 1930. Secretary to the Syrian Government after the dismissal of Sheikh Taj ed Din (1932). Acting Governor of Damascus during the elections of April 1932. President of the Municipality of Damascus, 1936, and Mohafiz of Damascus. Dismissed March 1942 and shelved in Council of State whence he was recalled to become Director-General of the Interior on the dismissal of Bahij al Khatib (q.v.) October 1943. Having quarrelled with his Minister (Lutf Haffar) was appointed Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs August 1944. A pleasant person and has shown himself to be co-operative particularly in putting through contracts for British firms for telecommunication material.

58. *Hiffel, Sheikh Abd al*

Born about 1914. Son of Sheikh Jeduan al Hiffel, the weak and stingy Sheikh of the Agaidat. Sheikh Abd al was elected Deputy for Mejadine in 1943. Speaks Arabic only but is intelligent and has the personality to command the respect of his followers. As he is still young and untried he is apt to resort to force to assert himself, but is not by nature turbulent. His popularity is on the increase amongst the Agaidat.

59. *Hindieh, Grégoire*

Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Aleppo. Born 1895. Educated in the Armenian Seminary in Rome. Member of a wealthy Aleppo family with political connexions. A brother was at one time Minister of Finance. Formerly known as a Francophile; after his brother's resignation from the Finance Ministry he became a vehement critic of the French

Administration in Syria, and later became just as critical of the Syrian Nationalist Administration.

A prelate whose interests are more temporal than spiritual and who is not much trusted locally.

60. *Hiraki, Hikmat*

Born about 1895. Prominent Moslem landowner of Maaret-en-Noman (Aleppo region). No political career, but always friendly to the French. Is a farmer and on very good terms with the Bedouins of his district and with his own tenants, being kindly. Became Minister of Ravitaillement in the Hassan al Hakim Government (September 1941 to April 1942), again in Husni Barazi's Government (April 1942 to January 1943) and again in Jamil Uslbi's Government (January 1943 to March 1943). Was also appointed Assistant to Jamil Uslbi as President of the Wheat Commission. Deputy 1943. Shrewd.

61. *Homs, Edmond*

Born 1901. Son of Albert Homsi educated A.U.B. Switzerland and England, private banker with interests in Egypt, who did lucrative business with Turks during the 1914 war. Was Syrian Minister of Finance (March to October 1936). Member of Syrian delegation for the conclusion of the Franco-Syrian Treaty in 1936. Elected Nationalist Deputy for Aleppo, December 1936. Took unofficial charge of the British Consulate at Aleppo during 1941 evacuation and has always been outspoken in his British sympathies. April 1946 appointed Minister of Finance in Saadullah Jabri's third Government when he instituted investigation into irregularities in Finance Ministry. Was at one time a candidate for post of Syrian Minister in London. Is intelligent and pleasant, if somewhat indolent.

62. *Horani, Akram*

Born Hama about 1915. Sunni Moslem. Lawyer. Extremist leader of Youth Party at Hama. Joined Iraqi revolution 1941 at head of a small number of young men; met German commission in Homs and Aleppo. Deputy 1943, and Secretary of Chamber of Deputies. Intelligent and has considerable influence over young men, including sons of notables, in spite of his anti-feudal views. Was engaged in active agitation against the Feudal Party (Ghaleb Azam, Abdul Qader Kailani (q.v.)) and escaped arrest together with Raif Milqi (q.v.) only by intervention of the Prime Minister (February 1944). A leading member of the Constitutional Liberal Party and a most active critic of the Government. Proprietor and chief editor of *El Yagza* first published May 1940—which from the first issue has adopted a violently anti-British attitude, and is notable even amongst Syrian newspapers for the inaccuracy of its news.

63. *Hubbi, Yuhanna*

Born about 1888 at Jezirat ibn Omar, Turkey. Educated at Catholic College in Mosul, where he worked as teacher and preacher, and later was secretary to the Catholic Mission. Syrian Catholic Archbishop of the Jezirah. A confirmed supporter of the Nationalists, and later of the Separatist Movement in Jezirah. Went to Paris in 1937 with the Syrian Catholic Patriarch, Cardinal Tappouni, and succeeded in securing from the French Government certain additional safeguards for his community in Jezirah, but was obliged to remain in Beirut for a time in 1938. In 1939 was again connected with the Separatist agitation in the Jezirah, which contributed to the downfall of the Nationalist Government in July 1939. During Vichy régime in Syria was pro-Ally and helped Allied troops during the occupation (1941). A keen churchman and an astute

politician who ably protects the interests of his flock.

64. *Hunaidi, Mohamed al*

Born Deir ez Zor about 1890. Sunni Moslem. Rich landlord and ex-president Saleh of Deir ez Zor Chamber of Commerce. Part-owner of Deir ez Zor Electricity Company and owner of several pumping engines along the Euphrates. Supporter of Nationalist bloc and linked with Mohammed el Ayesh (q.v.) being one of his strongest supporters. His son Qasim was elected Deputy for Deir ez Zor 1943.

65. *Huraiqi, Bishop, Ignatios*

Born about 1900. Greek Orthodox Bishop of Hama. As usual with Levant ecclesiastics, more interested in politics than church matters and tries to get his finger in every pie. Plays off Moslems against French. Supporter of Nationalist bloc, was elected vice-president of the Committee for the Defence of Palestine at the Arab Conference in Bludan 1937. At meeting at Aleppo (21st November, 1942) to commemorate Hanana, Nationalist hero, made a speech to the effect that there were no minorities. This roused uproar in the Christian and French circles.

Clever and unscrupulous.

66. *Ibish, Nuri al*

Born about 1895. Younger brother of Hussein (q.v.). Educated at A.U.B. and Cirencester Agricultural College. Very like his brother, who is his partner. Appointed by Saadullah Jabri's Government to be Director-General of Tribal Affairs (March 1944) on the cession of the Tribal Department by the French to the Syrians. A pleasant person but not strong and is continually threatening resignation as a result of inter-departmental disagreements. He does not draw his salary.

67. *Ibrahim Pasha, Khalil Bey*

Born about 1888 at Veranshohir, in Turkey. Sunni Moslem Kurd, chief of Milli tribe, but disclaimed by many real Kurds as there is a large Arab element in the tribe. Studied in Istanbul; speaks and writes Turkish and Arabic. Wealthy landowner in Rus el Ain; in his time has sided with Turks, Kurds, Arabs, French, British and Germans; a complete bandit and double-crosser, but possesses considerable charm. Elected Deputy for Hassateh 1943.

68. *Inglizi, Issam*

Born 1913. Educated American University of Beirut and Law College, Damascus. A friend of Sabri el Assali (q.v.) in whose office he was from 1937 to 1939. Practised as a lawyer from 1940 to 1944, when he was appointed head of a Department at the Presidency. Was known to be a sympathiser with the League of National Action and is thought to have been mixed up in the Shahbandar murder. Visited London, November 1945, as one of the secretaries to the Syrian delegation to the preliminary meeting of the United Nations Organisation Conference, and returned favourably impressed with British intentions. Speaks excellent English. A somewhat overfed and gross man, but easy to get on with.

69. *Ishay, Said Bey*

Born 1897. Syrian Orthodox Christian. Elected Christian Deputy for the Jezirah in 1937, despite the opposition of the Syrian Nationalists. Deputy for Kamishli 1943. Controller of the Chamber of Deputies 1943-44, though formerly one of the leaders of the Separatist movement in Jezirah, now supports Syrian unity.

70. *Jabi, Dr. Rushdi*

Born Damascus 1902. Sunni Moslem. Doctor of Medicine of American University of Beirut 1926. Doctor to Damascus Municipality 1936. Is more interested in social and political activities than in medicine. Since early 1920's has been associated with Ali Dandashi (q.v.) in Syrian Scout movement. Member of League of National Action (1936) and on good terms with Nationalist bloc, who made use of Jabi's scouts for political demonstrations and propaganda. Implicated in plot against the security of the State and Bahij al Khalib (July 1930) and fled the country to Transjordan, where he established a clinic in Amman. In his absence was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment and twenty years' banishment, and only returned to Syria in 1941, when charges against him had been dropped. In 1942 appointed president of Higher Scouting Committee and participated in movement to oppose affiliation of Scouts with Syrian Ministry of Youth and helped Rashid Ali to make his journey to Saudi Arabia 1943. Eventually came to terms and was nominated head of Higher Scout Committee. His brother Jamil (now defunct), also a member of the League of National Action (a Germanophile), fled the country on the Allied occupation. After the failure of his private practice in Damascus Dr. Rushdi secured the appointment of Director of Health in Latakia (April 1944).

Not a prominent nor pleasing personality in spite of his position.

71. *Jabri, Ihsan Bey al*

Born Aleppo about 1885. Brother of Saadullah al Jabri (q.v.). Deputy for Aleppo in the Parliament at Constantinople during the Turkish régime and for a time A.D.C. to the Sultan. Returned to Aleppo after the war and proceeded to Damascus, where he was Chamberlain to King Faisal during the latter's short reign. Fled with King Faisal at the time of the French occupation of Damascus, first to Palestine and then to Iraq. In 1924 he was delegated by the Syrian Arabs to go to Geneva to uphold the cause of Syrian independence at the League of Nations in company with the Druze leader, the Emir Shakhb Arslan. Sentenced by the French to permanent banishment from Syria and remained in Europe working for Syrian independence from 1924 to 1937. Amnestied in April 1937 and was Mohafiz of Latakia in November 1937 to April 1939. Was actively associated with bread strikes in Aleppo March 1941. Arrested by the British in Aleppo in September 1942 as potentially dangerous, but released in September 1943. An enthusiastic Nationalist of influence who still has personal ambitions.

72. *Jabri, Saadullah*

Born Aleppo 1890. An extreme Nationalist who helped to organise armed opposition to the French in 1920 and who has worked against them ever since. Elected Nationalist Deputy for Aleppo in 1936. Was a member of the Syrian delegation for the negotiation of the Franco-Syrian Treaty in Paris. He was Minister of Interior in Jamil Mardam's first Government (December 1936 to July 1937) and first Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Interior in the second Jamil Mardam Government (July 1937 to February 1939). Was suspected of complicity in the murder of Dr. Shahbandar (July 1940) and fled with Jamil Mardam and Latif Haffar to Iraq. Returned to Syria in May 1941. Made inflammatory speech decrying the measure of independence granted by the Allies at Hanana's celebration (the 21st November, 1942). Deputy for Aleppo 1943 and Prime Minister under President Quwatli (q.v.) (August 1943-October 1944) during which time

he showed an unusual spirit of statesmanship and authority in quelling civil disturbances. President of the Chamber of Deputies October 1944 to September 1945. Syrian representative to Arab League Council in June and in November 1945. Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence September 1945 to April 1946. Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs April 1946.

Has a keen brain, a keen wit and a sense of humour. Has unfortunately no real experience of administration and, now his main object of securing complete independence has been attained, does not seem to have any clearly defined policy. Ruthless but unlike Jamil Mardam Bey (q.v.) whatever faults he may have is not a trimmer. At times he can be extremely obstinate when he will take up a purely negative attitude summed up in the words "I don't understand." He has much charm of manner when in a good mood, a ready flow of conversation and likes to assume the role of raconteur.

73. *Jebara, Hassan Bey*

Alawite. Born about 1897 at Alexandretta where he was educated in the French Collège des Frères. Worked in the Deutsche Palestina Bank and on the Baghdad Railway before the 1914 war. After the armistice of 1918 he supported the French, and in 1942 was appointed Director of the Finance Department in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Went to Geneva in 1937 to assist the League of Nations experts in drawing up the statute of the sanjak. Supported the Alawite element in the sanjak, which he has done much to organise. Expelled from Alexandretta in August 1938 and appointed Director of Finance at Aleppo later in that year. Appointed Director-General of Finance by Khaled el Azim in April 1941 and combined this with the directorate of Supply for one year. Inspector of Trade Disputes, 1943; Minister of Ravitaillement in Fares Khouri's second Government April to August 1945. Minister of Ravitaillement in Fares Khouri's third Government August to October 1945. Minister of National Economy and acting Minister of Ravitaillement and Government Representative MIRA in Saadullah Jabri's second Government October 1945 to April 1946; acting Minister of Finance from December 1945. Reverted to Director-General of Finance and appointed Government representative on Supreme Council of Common Interests May 1946. Being born in the Hatay, he bitterly resents its cession to Turkey, especially as the Turks confiscated his property there. Until outbreak of war was *persona non grata* to Turks.

An able financier and believed to be honest, though he has recently been accused in the press of being party to financial irregularities in the Ministry of Finance. A timorous personality although of stubborn character. Not liked on account of his coldness.

74. *Jneid, Mohamed*

Born about 1885. Alawite, Chief of the Rasha-wind section of the Kalbiah tribe living at Sallah in the Masial district. Is very popular with his tribe. Owner of extensive properties on which he has recently redeemed the mortgage. Is paid by the Syrian Tobacco Monopoly to suppress tobacco smuggling, but is believed, nevertheless, to help smugglers. On bad terms with Suleiman Murshed (q.v.), jealous of the Abbas and Kinj families. Deputy for Masial in Syrian Parliament, 1937. Middle aged, calm and reasonable, kept on good terms with the Administration and the French as he considered this to be in the interest of his tribe. For this reason the other leaders in Alawite area and in Syria regard him as spineless. Elected Deputy for Masial, 1943.

75. *Kabbara, Sami*

Born Damascus 1904. Sunni Moslem. Doctor of law of Montpellier and Geneva. Diplômé of the "Institut des Hautes Etudes de Droit International." Chief Clerk to the Speaker of the Syrian Parliament 1932-33. Owner and editor of newspaper *Al Nidal*.

As a personal friend of the late Dr. Shalbandar, is opposed to the Nationalists. Although he failed to be elected in 1943, he secured the most votes of any non-Nationalist candidate. Is in open opposition to the present régime. Claims his paper is independent. A well educated man.

76. *Kalawi Akram*

Born 1905. Speaks English and a little French. His family own village of Beit Sawa in the Damascus Ghouta. Helped Shukri Quwatli in 1943 elections on whose list he hoped to appear for election, but he did not do so; became dissatisfied with the present régime. Suspected of having helped Raschid Ali to go to Saudi Arabia. For the past year has been actively touring Syria contacting notables throughout the country on behalf of King Abdullah and reporting somewhat over optimistically on the successes attending his efforts.

77. *Kailani, Sudi (Shami Pir)*

Born about 1904 in Damascus. Brother of Akram Kailani (q.v.). Made no secret of his admiration for the Germans and after the British occupation of Syria in 1941 reappeared in Waziristan where he is known to have stirred up tribesmen to join in a rebellion against the Afghan Government. Was found in the British Zone of Germany in the autumn of 1943; representations have been made by the Foreign Office to the War Office that all possible steps should be taken to prevent him returning to Syria. The India Office take the same view as regards India.

He returned to Damascus however in July 1946 in a French ship.

78. *Kayali, Abdurrahman*

Born 1890. Educated in the American University of Beirut. Married into the Mudarras family. King Faisal's Chamberlain at Damascus. Prominent Nationalist but inclined to preach moderation. Elected Nationalist Deputy for Aleppo in 1936. Minister of Education and of Justice in the former Nationalist Government. Went to Geneva in December 1936, to put forward the Arab claim for Alexandretta. Sent from Damascus to Aleppo in February 1937 to apologise to the French for the Iron Shirts clash with the French Gendarmerie. Minister of Education and Justice in the second Jamil Mardam Cabinet (July 1937 to February 1939). Minister of National Economy in the Lutfi Haffar Cabinet (February to March 1939). His moderate party was swamped in July 1943 elections by Saadullah Jabri, but he was eventually elected himself and was Minister for Justice in Saadullah Jabri's first Government August 1943 to October 1944. Minister of Justice and Minister of Public Works in Fares Khouri's first Government October 1944 to April 1945. Since he left the Government he has become a leading member of the Constitutional Liberal Party and has lost no opportunity of attacking succeeding Governments in the Chamber of Deputies. His influence is probably less than might be expected. Intelligent, but not masterful.

79. *Kecati, Rudolphe*

Born 1885 in Cairo. Roman Catholic. Doctor of law of Paris. Lawyer for the Damascus Municipality 1921-29. Was owner and editor (assisted by his son André) of Damascus French language daily *Le*

Matin which was suppressed after the events of May 1945 to reappear in French for one day three months later but was finally converted into an Arab language daily *Al Zaman* in January 1946. D.N.B. agent at Damascus from 1938 to beginning of war. Supported Axis whenever it paid him in Vichy year. On assumption of power by Nationalist Government in 1949 showed himself a French tool.

Complete opportunist and clever lawyer.

80. *Kekhia, Rushdi*

Born 1905. Belongs to a well-known Aleppo Moslem family. Studied law at Damascus University. Elected Deputy for Aleppo December 1936, he became known for his vehement speeches in the Syrian Assembly. Resigned from the Nationalist bloc March 1939. Deputy for Aleppo in 1943 in opposition to both the Jabri and Kayali groups, and has remained opposed to them in Parliament; he has on several occasions refused to accept a Ministry. A man of some character and seriousness of purpose but has not yet succeeded in gaining much influence.

81. *Khair, Saqr Bey*

Born about 1890. Alawite. Leader of Kalbiyah tribe of the Alawite. Member of the Administrative Council of the Alawite Province. Resides at Rasim, near Jableh. In 1936 supported Ibrahim Kinj (q.v.) in his opposition to union with Syria, but now supports Nationalist Party for reasons of regional politics. Not intelligent, ill-educated and coarse.

82. *Khankan, Riya'at, Colonel*

Born 1904 in Damascus of Kurdish origin from Khanaqin. Educated American University of Beirut and in Damascus Military School. Studied St. Cyr Military School and elsewhere in France. Appointed to Chief of Staff's Office in Beirut 1936 and to First Bureau of Troupes Spéciales, Beirut, 1942. Assistant Officer Commanding Coastguards Desert Force, June 1945-April 1946. Appointed Chief of Staff Syrian Army, April 1946. Speaks French, Turkish and a little English. Does not belong to any political party. Not very impressive, but well-disposed.

83. *Khatib, Bahij Bey al*

Born about 1898 in the Lebanon and educated at the American College, Beirut. Appointed a Government clerk in Faisal's Administration (1919-20) and went to Palestine on the occupation of Syria by the French. He returned in 1923 and obtained a minor Government post. During the revolt of 1925-26 Bahij Bey served in the Ministry of the Interior and earned the reputation of being a pro-French official. He afterwards served under Sheikh Taj ed Din in 1928 and as private secretary to Haggi Bey al Azim in 1932, thus incurring the displeasure of the Nationalist Party. He was then sent as Mohafiz to Deir ez Zor until 1934, when Sheikh Taj ed Din, once more Prime Minister, appointed him Administrative Inspector in the Ministry of the Interior. He also filled the posts of head of the Municipality and Director-General of Police. In 1937 the Nationalist Party, who had come into power, dislodged him on account of his alleged pro-French sympathies. He was, however, retained in Government service on French insistence and did much to quieten down the situation in the Jebel Druze, where he went as administrator in November 1937. Did equally good work in the Jezirah in 1939. When Nationalist Government under Jamil Mardam was dissolved and the Constitution suspended, he became (9th July, 1939) President of the Council of Directors. #

Government of civil servants. He administered Syria wisely and efficiently until April 1941, when the Council was replaced by the Khaled al Azim Government. In June 1939 a group including Najih and Munir Hayess, and believed to have been hired by Nationalists, plotted to murder him, but the plot was discovered and culprits arrested. They were subsequently released at the orders, it is believed, of the Italian Disarmament Commission (November 1940). During the Khaled al Azim Government Bahij occupied his old post of Inspector-General of the Interior, but on formation of Sheikh Taj ed Din's Government (September 1941) he reluctantly (on French pressure) accepted appointment of Acting Minister of Interior. Had several disagreements with the French over their non-implementation of promise of independence and with the President over his interference with internal departmental affairs. When Cabinet was reformed after fall of Hassan al Hakim (18th April, 1942), Bahij again reverted to post of Inspector-General. Shortly after the accession to power of Nationalists in August 1943, was first relegated to post of Mohafiz of Damascus Province and later placed on retired list (October 1943). Withdrew to Lebanon and was told by Government not to return to Damascus, as they feared him to be a French tool, alleged to have been included in the Quisling Government which was to have been set up after the events of May 1945. He is younger brother of Sheikh Fand al Khatib, prominent figure of Arab revolt, and later councillor to the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, a great Arab poet and Anglophil.

He has earned the unusual reputation of being a painstaking and honest public servant. Speaks French and English fluently. Not above political intrigue, for which he is well placed, owing to his wide contacts.

84. *Khoja, Hamid*

Born 1907 of a family of religious teachers. Educated at the Franciscan School at Aleppo and at the Teachers' Training College, Aleppo. Studied law in Paris, where he obtained his degree. Deputy for Raqqa 1932-36 and again 1943. Appointed Kaimmakam 1937 first at Ziwiyeh and then at Jerablous. A leading member of the Constitutional Liberal Party in Parliament and is personally supported by six of the tribal Deputies from the Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor areas. Has shown readiness to co-operate with the British; is not inclined to support Saadullah Jabri because he believes that the latter supports the traditional enemies of himself and his tribal colleagues. An agreeable and cultivated individual.

85. *Khouri, Fares al*

Born about 1875. Brother of Faiz Khouri (q.v.). Educated at American College at Beirut. Was a dragoon at British Consulate, Damascus, from 1899 to 1909. A member of the Turkish Parliament in 1913. Lawyer. Minister of Finance under Faisal, when he discreetly lined his pockets. Minister of Public Instruction under Damad, 1926. Deported some months later on suspicion of assisting rebels, thus winning martyr's crown of glory and confidence of Moslems. Well-off. Chairman of board of directors of National Cement Company; was professor of the School of Law, but resigned in 1941; legal adviser to the municipality until 1942, when he passed it to his son Suhail. Took leading part in the general strike of 1936. Went to Paris in March 1936 as member of the Nationalist delegation to negotiate a Franco-Syrian treaty. Deputy, December 1936. Elected President of the Chamber of Deputies (Speaker) on the 21st December, 1936, in recognition of his services in the Nationalist bloc in the treaty negotiations. From fall of Nationalist Government in 1939, played no active part in politics

until 1943, when he was re-elected Deputy by a bare majority; President of the Chamber August 1943 to October 1944 and again October 1945 to October 1946. Prime Minister and Minister for Interior and for Education October 1944 to April 1945. Member of Syrian Committee which signed Charter of Arab League, March 1945; Prime Minister April to August 1945. Head of Syrian Delegation to United Nations Organisation Conference at San Francisco April 1945. Prime Minister August to October 1945. Head of Syrian Delegation to United Nations Organisation Conference at London November 1945. Is a prudent and skillful, if unscrupulous, politician, who is, despite his religion, on good terms with the Moslems and not with the Christians. His age has begun to tell on him during the last year; he has had several dangerous heart attacks and he appears to have lost some of his grip. Talks excellent English. A likable but obstinate old man.

86. *Khouri, Faiz al*

Born about 1891. Greek Orthodox. Educated by Irish Presbyterian Mission, at American College, Beirut, and at Law School, Istanbul. Originally Protestant, but converted to Orthodoxy in 1935 as latter community had representative in Chamber and Protestants had not. Elected to the Constituent Assembly, 1928, as mouthpiece for his brother Fares (q.v.). Noted Nationalist. Dean of the Faculty of Law at the Syrian University, Damascus, from year 1941 to 1943. Nationalist Deputy in 1932 with great following among university students. Played a leading part in the first session of Parliament and again during the general strike of 1936. Re-elected Deputy in December 1936. Head of the Damascus Bar, 1936 to 1940. Minister of Finance and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in the fifteen day ministry of Lutfi Haffar, 1939. Minister for Foreign Affairs under Hassan al Hakim, September 1941 to April 1942, and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance in Husni Barazi Government (April 1942 to January 1943). Took strong line with the French over concessions of form to Syrian independence, but was unsuccessful. In agreement with Lebanese, struggled to obtain control of "Intérêts Communs." Framed budget for 1942 balanced (on paper) with proceeds from new taxes on income and agriculture. Was president of Commission supérieure to monopolise Syrian wheat, and displayed considerable energy and courage. Was attacked by landlords, &c., as being a Christian and corrupt, and forced to resign presidency of Wheat Office in July 1942. When Jamil Ulahi replaced Husni Barazi as Prime Minister (January 1943) Faiz Khouri gave up the Ministry of Finance, retaining only the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; one of the reasons for this being that it was felt that, as a Christian, he was not in a strong position to enforce taxation projects. He remained in office until the fall of the Ulahi Government, March 1943. His association with the non-parliamentary régime of 1941-43 brought him into disfavour with the Nationalists, who refused to include him on their electoral list. He stood as an independent and failed, retiring to Beirut where he remained for a year. Appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Moscow April 1945, remaining there for a few months only as Acting Director-General Ministry for Foreign Affairs, October to December 1945. Placed on pension 1946.

A man of moderate political opinions and considerable intelligence with undoubted ambition but has the reputation of being difficult to work with. Speaks good English and French. Despite his religion, is on good terms with Moslems.

87. *Kinj, Ali al*

Born 1895. Alawite. Brother of Ibrahim (q.v.). Director of the Interior in the Alawite Administration

1939-43. Was exiled by Free French, together with Shawkat Abbas (q.v.) for some time during the summer of 1941, but later returned to his position. Was dismissed in January 1943 by Damascus Government, but appears to have refused to accept his dismissal. The Abbas family tend to defend him as they use him for his influence over his brother Ibrahim (q.v.), who fears him. The credit for his salary in his post of Director of Interior was suppressed from the budget of 1943. Uncouth, unintelligent, dishonest, tactless, intriguer. Detested generally, especially by Christians. Refused a minor Government post early in 1943 and is now disgruntled.

88. *Kinj, Ibrahim*

Born about 1880. Alawite, of peasant stock. Has risen to the leadership of the Hadadin tribe during the last twenty to thirty years, having wrested it from the Al Hamid family. Appointed president of Alawite Administrative Council in 1931. In 1933 opposed the union of the Alawite Province with the Syrian State and Alawite representation in the Syrian Parliament. Since 1918 has backed the mandatory Power, and was on good terms with the Abbas family (q.v.). In 1943 he led an election campaign against the Mohafiz of Latakia, Shawkat Abbas (q.v.), and as a result failed to be elected in his own town of Jabel. By time-serving politics and by tobacco, hashish and even arms smuggling, has accumulated both land and wealth. In politics is openly opposed to the National bloc. Bluff, more diplomatic than his brother Ali, ill-educated, but shrewd and popular owing to his lavish generosity and hospitality.

89. *Lian, Mikhael Michel*

Born Aleppo 1900. Greek Orthodox. Educated American University, Beirut. Professes an extreme form of nationalism. Was secretary at Aleppo of the Nationalist bloc before he was elected Deputy for Aleppo in July 1943. In August 1945 he organised a large number of Deputies to present a petition to the President of the Chamber asking for the resignation of Fares Khouri's second Government. August to November 1945 Minister for Foreign Affairs in Fares Khouri's third Government. April 1946 Minister of Public Works in Saadullah Jabri's third Government. Speaks some English and French and has shown himself anxious to be well regarded by the British. He is an assiduous political intriguer and enjoys Saadullah Jabri's support but otherwise appears to be stupid and incompetent.

90. *Maasarani, Abdul Hadi Ben Abdullah*

Moslem. Born about 1905. A Homs merchant and local representative of the Shell Company. A redoubtable leader of the National bloc, and former chief of the Nazi-inspired Arab Guard; has a considerable reputation for physical courage and Xenophobia. Commanded a troop in Ibn Saud's Wahabi columns against the Hashemite forces during the last war, later fought against the French in King Feisal's desperate rearguard action in Mesaloun; took part in the revolution of 1925, fighting in Fawzi Kawakji's forces at El-Ghota and Baalbek, afterwards joined the National bloc and is suspected of having taken part, financially if not personally, in both the Palestine and Iraq rebellions. Interned in 1936 by the French and was again interned in 1942 for security reasons; released in 1943. Has had business associations with Mazhar Pasha Baslan (q.v.).

91. *Maasarani, Haj Sulaiman*

Born Homs about 1905 of humble family. Sunni Moslem. Chemist. Extreme Nationalist who, by

demagogic methods, acquired political influence. President of Muslim Orphanage, Homs, and local secretary of National bloc, Nationalist Deputy 1930. Several times imprisoned between June and October 1942 for harbouring Palestinian rebels. Owns and edits *Al Duka* a newspaper in Homs and enjoys the protection of Shukri Quwatli (q.v.).

92. *Mahasin, Said*

Born about 1885. Poor Damascus family. Educated Constantinople. Lawyer. Minister of Interior under Taj ed Din, 1928-30. Rigged elections to the Constituent Assembly, 1928. Was attacked by Nationalists and jettisoned by Taj ed Din. A professed monarchist and attacks the present régime on every occasion. Head of the Damascus Bar (1940 to 1942). Professor of civil law in the Syrian University. One of the best lawyers in Damascus (a partner of Sami Midani).

93. *Malayan, Hrant, Colonel*

Armenian Catholic. Born Istanbul 1895; graduate of Istanbul College; teacher Military College Istanbul 1915-16. Took part in 1914-18 war with 53rd Turkish Division at Ghaza. Chief of the Armenian Division in the French army at Beirut in 1918. As second lieutenant took part in occupation of Adana and Cilicia; promoted to rank of captain 1918; was appointed to Syrian Gendarmerie at Aleppo, Acre and Antioch 1921 to 1925, during Syrian revolution was transferred to Damascus 1925-26 in charge of Gendarmerie Transport Company; from 1935-37 was Officer Commanding, Gendarmerie Hama, Deir-az-Zor and Euphrates. 1939-41 Officer Commanding, Gendarmerie, Damascus, Mohafazat. 1942-45 was promoted to rank of lieutenant-colonel and appointed Officer Commanding, Gendarmerie, First Legion. In August 1945 was promoted to rank of full colonel and appointed acting Commandant-General of Gendarmerie. He speaks Arabic, English, French, Turkish, Greek, Italian and Armenian.

Extremely able and intelligent and it is largely due to his capability that the Syrian Gendarmerie has been reorganised and has reached a reasonable standard of efficiency. It is doubtful however whether he will be able to retain his position in view of his Armenian descent.

He has shown himself ready to co-operate with the British authorities and at times is inclined to be too friendly for the good of his reputation as a Syrian official.

94. *Marashli, Haj Fateh al*

Born about 1860. Member of a wealthy Aleppo Moslem family. Notorious pro-Turk during 1914 war, but joined Ibrahim Hanano in the rebellion which he organised against the French and fought with him till 1921, when he escaped to Turkey, where he owns villages near the Syrian frontier, and settled in Qazi Aintap. Opted for Turkish nationality and is still *persona grata* to the Turks, in whose interest he is still reputed to be working, despite the gratitude lavished on him by the Syrian Nationalists. Returned to Aleppo in April 1937 on the proclamation of the amnesty and was accorded a triumphal reception. Is now living quietly.

95. *Mardam, Haidar Bey*

Brother-in-law of Jamil Mardam Bey. Born Damascus 1908. Graduated from Law School, Damascus, 1923. Married Damascus Christian and went to France to study law for several years. Secretary to municipality 1929-30. In 1930 Kaimakam at Ma'arat. January 1938 (Nationalist Government) "chef du protocole" in the Foreign Office and in March 1938 appointed Acting Mohafiz of Jezirah. In July 1939 Kaimakam of

Iddib. In August 1941 appointed Mohafiz of Homs, where he remained until June 1942, when he was dismissed because he was suspected by Syrian Government of carrying information to French. In August 1942 he was appointed to Foreign Office as "chef du protocole." Mohafiz of Hauran, April 1943 to March 1946, when he was transferred to the central office at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, but refused to take up his post as it was graded lower in rank than that of Mohafiz. While Mohafiz of the Hauran he was suspected by the Government of being in suspiciously close touch with Amman, but was the first to "clean up" French in 1945, when he seems to have shown energy, courage and ability to handle a fluid situation, and firmness tempered with justice towards a defeated enemy.

Mildly Nationalist in politics, pleasant and open-minded, but rather lacking in energy.

96. *Mardam, Jamil*

Born about 1890. Nationalist member of Constituent Assembly 1928. Deputy in 1932 and Minister of Finance. Was member of the Nationalist delegation than went to Paris in March 1936 and became Prime Minister and Minister of National Economy December 1936 to July 1937. He formed new Cabinet July 1937, but his Government was attacked, notably by Dr. Shabbandar and Mimir Ajani, over the 1936 Franco-Syrian Treaty. Relations between Mardam and Shabbandar continued to deteriorate until the former was forced to resign. He and his Cabinet were openly accused by the press of great corruption and peculation. When Shabbandar was murdered in July 1940 Jamil Mardam was accused by the Shabbandarists of complicity and, with a few others, fled to Bagdad. Was in Bagdad at beginning of Rashid Ali revolt (May 1941), but is believed to have exerted moderating influence on rebels. Returned to Syria May 1941.

In January 1942 he went to Egypt, and, on his return, tried to provoke a political crisis by pretending that he enjoyed the confidence of the British, who had asked him to form a Government. He repeated this manoeuvre with greater insistence in June 1942. As a result, the Allies obliged him to live in the Lebanon and a communiqué was issued condemning his action. Elected Deputy in 1943 on Shukri Quwatli's list. Minister for Foreign Affairs, and president of Councils Commission in Saadullah Jabri's first Government, August 1943 to October 1944. Syrian representative on the Committee of Foreign Ministers of Arab Countries which met in Cairo in February 1945 to draw up Arab League Charter. Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Defence and Government representative to Supreme Mira Council in Fares Khouri's first Government, October 1944 to April 1945. Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Defence in Fares Khouri's second Government, April to August 1945; Acting Prime Minister during the Prime Minister's absence at U.N.O. Conference in San Francisco and was therefore head of the Government at the time of the events of May 1945. Appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Cairo, October 1945, and also to Saudi Arabia, October 1945, and presided at November 1945 session of Arab League.

Foxy, sly and a trimmer. He is much easier to work with than Saadullah Jabri (q.v.), but less trustworthy. A man of great ambition and considerable ability, but not very scrupulous in money matters. Is probably the most likely of the leading members of the National bloc to ally himself with a monarchical movement if he thought his interests lay that way.

97. *Muizer ibn Abdul Muhsen el Jarba, Sheikh*

Born 1907. Became head of the tribe of Shummar of Zor in 1907, when French recognised

him instead of Mishad al Farea. Distant cousin of Dalhan al Hadi (q.v.), who aspires to his place. Deputy 1936-39. In 1941 had contacts with German Armistice Commission in Beirut.

Of a peaceful disposition and weak in character. Was always led by French.

98. *Milqi, Raif*

Born Hama about 1905 of humble family. Sunni Moslem. Lawyer. Extreme Nationalist and fomenter of riots. Very intelligent and has great influence over the masses, who support his anti-federal policy. Sincerely believes in his cause. Is prepared to use violence. Deputy for Hama 1943; has become a leading member of the Constitutional Liberal Party and joint editor of *Al Yaqza* with Akram Hourani (q.v.). Has a reputation in Parliament for demagogic oratory, which is usually of the most violent type directed against someone or something.

99. *Mohammed, Said Agha al*

Born at Amouda 1890. A Sunni Moslem Kurd and religious fanatic. Writes some Arabic, speaks Turkish and Kurdish. Chief of Dakourieh tribe. Took a leading part in Christian massacres in 1937; fled to Iraq, but returned in 1942. A letter exists in his handwriting calling on Kurds in the name of their religion to fight the British. Elected Deputy for Qamielidh in 1943. Strong and sturdy, but influential in his district.

100. *Mudarres, Mohamed Khalil*

Born 1894. Member of a family of wealthy Aleppo landowners who have a perpetual feud with the Jabris (q.v.). President of the Aleppo Cotton Spinning Company. Moderate in politics. Appointed Minister of Finance in the Ministry of Nassouhi al Bukhari (March-May 1939). Was several times consulted by Sheikh Taj ed Din in 1942 with a view to his becoming a Minister in the Syrian Government, but is reputed to have refused any office unless it was that of Prime Minister. He did not therefore become a member of the Cabinet. His brother, Ahmed, was elected Deputy 1943. Industrious and well respected, but conceited and touchy; is a friend of Jamil Mardam Bey and Edmond Honsi.

101. *Mujhem ben Muhaid, Amir*

Born about 1885. Bedouin chief, head of the Fedaan Wuld tribe in the Jezirah and Euphrates region. Given the title of Amir and awarded the Legion of Honour by the French in 1921 on the model of the chiefs of the Rualla. Deputy for Jezirah in 1936. Has well-armed forces and has been supported since 1920 by the French though he is careful not to offend the British. Of considerable importance but unpleasant, cold and astute in character, likely to turn any emergency to his advantage. Always wears black spectacles. His eldest son, Nouri, lacks his father's dignity and astuteness. Both father and son are regarded as French tools.

102. *Murad, Leon*

Born in Aleppo about 1900 of Armenian stock, and was a clerk in French delegation there. On account of his efficiency in this capacity was transferred to the High Commission in Beirut, where he remained on the economic side. Director of Ravitaillement for Syria August 1942 to December 1943 during which period he is believed to have lined his pockets. Syrian representative on Supreme Council of Common Interests January 1944 to June 1946. Appointed Director of Syrian Mira June 1946 and has shown himself suspicious of the two British

Advisers. Has the reputation of being efficient but difficult and disagreeable to work with.

103. *Murhej, Farid*

Born Hama about 1900. Greek Orthodox. Wealthy landowner of Hama, who habitually indulges in smuggling. Cultivates friendship of Moslems, with whom he is well established. Enjoys support of Bishop Hurski (q.v.). Deputy for Hama 1943 and Controller in the Chamber of Deputies October 1945 to October 1946.

An attractive personality but entirely self interested.

104. *Murshed, Sheikh Rakan*

Born about 1905. Bedouin chief. Head of the small but predatory Sabs'a tribe (Bteinat), which is usually encamped in the Salimiyeh district. Deputy for the Damascus tribes 1936-39. A sheikh after the novelist's heart. Generous to the poor but a fierce ruler. Realises that the nomadic life of the Bedouins is doomed to extinction and is now actively sedentarising his people. Elected Deputy for Palmyra tribal area 1943.

105. *Murshed, Suleiman al*

Born about 1895. Alawite, living at Jawbat Borgial near Haffeh. Started life as a shepherd but is now without doubt the most remarkable personality in the Alawite Province. About 1923 proclaimed himself a semi-divine being and secured some thousands of followers in Haffeh and Massiaf, to whom he was known as "Al Rabb" (the Lord). He imposed on the credulous peasantry of the Jebel Alawite by various devices, such as ventriloquy and luminous paints to enhance his divine pretensions. Deputy for Sablonn district to the Syrian Parliament in 1937, but in 1939 was used by the French and the Abbases (q.v.) to overthrow Nationalist influence in the Alawite Province. At this time he usurped the properties of various Nationalists (including the Shreitah family (q.v.), from whom he took the important village of Bustamo), Christian villages and even of his own followers. His conduct and his success have cost him the friendship of the other Alawite chiefs, who resent his autocratic behaviour (the Abbas family, for reasons of local policy, continue to tolerate him), and cost him the adoration of his followers, whom he has shocked by his unbridled licence, especially in matters of women and seizures of property. Elected Deputy for Haffeh in 1943—with French backing created considerable trouble for the Syrian Government in the Alaouite District. In 1944 was in forced residence in Damascus pending an enquiry into his alleged murders and land acquisitions. Was allowed to return to Jawbat early in 1945 when further trouble broke out. Since when various unsuccessful attempts have been made to reach an agreed settlement of the various disputed cases in which he is involved.

An unrepentant individualist, exploiting to the full the political powers which his divine pretensions give him, but prepared to co-operate with the strong. His three sons are at the American University of Beirut.

106. *Naili, Assim*

Born about 1905. Educated French Prères School, Damascus, and Damascus Law College. 1936 was head of the Ironshirts (National bloc organisation). 1936-39 was private secretary to Jamil Bey Mardam, and was implicated in Shafibandar murder. Was acquitted after seven months in prison. 1943 appointed Master of Ceremonies at Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in March 1945 appointed chargé d'affaires at Cairo. He returned in September and has since been acting head of

Political Section of Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Master of Ceremonies.

A flabby and not very inspiring personality. Is looked upon as being one of Jamil Mardam's men and while friendly and helpful does not appear to possess much intelligence.

107. *Namy, Damad Ahmed*

Born about 1885. Circassian origin. Grandfather was Emir Mahmood and Governor of Tripoli. Father was Fakhr Bey and had large estates in Beirut. Ahmed Namy was son-in-law of Abdul Hamid and retains, rather questionably, the title of Damad, although divorced. Became Chief of State of Syria 1926-28 at a critical moment and worked conscientiously at a policy of conciliation. The French High Commissioner dropped him without ceremony and replaced him by Taj ed Din. Supported Nationalists in the Advisory Council 1931. Still clings to the hope of being made King of Syria. Has far less political influence than he thinks due to the fact that (a) he lives in Beirut, (b) he is a Circassian and not an Arab and (c) he has a Christian wife.

Well meaning, dignified, perhaps a little fatuous.

108. *Nizam ed Din, Abdul Baqi*

Born 1903 in the Nassibain, Turkey, where his father was Kaimakam. Elementary education. Is recognised as a political leader of Moslems in the Jezirah. Was elected Deputy in 1943 with French support, but now professes strong independent Arab views. Owns large properties from which he draws his income. Reported to have sympathised with the revolt of Rashid Ali in Iraq.

109. *Phares, Georges*

Born Damascus 1896. Greek Catholic. Educated at Jesuit College, Beirut. Former owner and editor of Damascus French language daily paper *Les Echos de Syrie*, which was suppressed after events of May 1945, reappearing in December 1945 in Arabic as *Barada*; co-partner with Munir Rayess (q.v.). Has always been pro-Allied even in most difficult times. Reuter's correspondent at Damascus.

110. *Qassab, Sheikh Kamil el*

Born Damascus about 1870 and received a religious legal training. Is considered an expert on religious law. While a supporter of Faisal was a member of the Independence Committee formed to oppose an agreement between Faisal and the French. This committee provoked Damascene resistance to the French which ended with the battle of Meisun. Then went to the newly formed Saudi Arabia, where he became Minister of Education. Returned to Damascus and took part in the Syrian revolt of 1925 and was exiled until 1937, when amnestied. Formed Society of Ulama, a powerful religious association, and became its first head. Tried to induce Sheikh Taj to make him the equivalent of Sheikh al Islam, but was unsuccessful (1942). Has always been a politician and enjoys a certain power in the Midan Quarter. Belongs to no party and likes to exploit his influence. Most ambitious. An eloquent public speaker.

111. *Qitami, Ogla*

Born about 1883. Residence Kharaba. Greek Orthodox. Leading Christian of Jebel Druze. Supporter of Atrash family, who use him as contact man. Was protégé of Emir Selim el Atrash. Education Arabic only. Said to be bastard son of Shibli Bey el Atrash. Sultan Pasha and Qitami were awarded pension by Syrian Government (1942) for their part in 1925 revolt. Deputy for minorities in Jebel Druze 1948.

Influential and intelligent. An intriguer who was viewed with great suspicion by the French. Professes to be pro-British.

112. *Qudmani, Abdul Ghani*

Born 1890. Enlisted in the Turkish gendarmerie and obtained a commission in the Turkish army 1914-18 war. Held a number of posts in the Syrian gendarmerie from 1920 to 1942, when he had risen to the rank of major. Mohafiz and Commander of the Gendarmerie, Hama, 1942-43. Assistant Commander-General of Gendarmerie and Director-General of Police, March-December 1943. Private A.D.C. to Shukri Quwatli, January 1944 to April 1945. Inspector-General of Gendarmerie since April 1945. A man of little education and stupid, but sly, and for the past year has been intriguing against his superior, Colonel Hrant Maloyan (q.v.). Dependent on his influence with the President and the Minister of the Interior, with whom he is an intimate friend.

113. *Qudmani, Fuad*

Born Damascus about 1900. As a result of serving as a clerk in a lawyer's office, was "tolerated" as a lawyer about 1920. Of no importance until he became member of Shafibandar Party in 1938. Remaining loyal to his chief, when latter was murdered, he shared with Babil (q.v.) the leadership of the party.

Elected Dean of the Damascus Bar in October 1942 to 1944 after elections, whose validity was challenged by his opponents.

Not very intelligent and rather unpopular, but pro-British. Tried to organise an opposition to Nationalist Government, 1944. Elected president of Confederation of Lawyers' Syndicates June 1946.

114. *Qudsi, Nazem*

Born 1906 in Aleppo. Lawyer. Active during troubles of February 1936. Resigned from Nationalist bloc March 1939 and has since been in opposition to the bloc. Considered suitable in 1941 as British propagandist, but refused pay. Suggested for position in Syrian Cabinet in March 1942, but his candidature was ruled out by the Allies on account of his past xenophobic record. Elected Deputy in July 1943 and worked with Rushdi Kakhia (q.v.) as reasonable critic of Government, refused Cabinet rank. Appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to United States January 1945. Member of Syrian Delegation to U.N.O. Conference at San Francisco April 1945. Member of Syrian Delegation to U.N.O. Conference at London November 1945.

115. *Quwatli, Shukri*

Born about 1886. Supporter of Faisal. During the rebellion of 1925 afforded every assistance to the rebels. He fled to Palestine, but returned to Syria in 1931. Vice-president of the Nationalist bloc at its inception. Made Finance Minister and Defence Minister (combined) in Jamil Mardam's Cabinet on the 21st December, 1936. As head of his own party (Istiklal), but allied with the Nationalists, was bitterly opposed to Council of Directors, but until French armistice (June 1940) did not take overt political action. He was in close contact with the Italian Disarmament Commission during the whole of their stay here and was a constant caller on the Italian Consulate in Damascus. Met Roser, the German Agent, several times during the latter's stay in Syria. On arrival of Allies was openly opposed to them and judged it best to go on "pilgrimage" to Mecca (October 1941). Went to Bagdad, where he was entrusted by Ibn Saud with various negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

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Returned to Damascus (September 1942). Entered elections of 1948 as Nationalist leader. Elected Deputy and President of the Republic by overwhelming majority. Fell seriously ill (April 1944); his life was saved by British military doctors with transfusions of British blood. Visited Bagdad in March 1945, where he was not warmly received. Attended meeting of Arab rulers at Inshass in May 1946.

A determined exponent of pan-Arabism. Is somewhat slow and ponderous. Has not got a quick or brilliant brain but has a good deal of wisdom. Mentally and physically he might not unfairly be likened to an elephant. Makes quite a good representative head of state. Was regarded in the early days of the war as pro-Axis and undoubtedly had contacts with Axis representatives in the Levant, but this can probably be attributed to entire single-mindedness of purpose in the Arab cause. It has recently been ratiocated, but there is no proof, that he has used his official position to advance his own financial interests. Latterly he co-operated well with the British authorities and he almost certainly has a sense of profound gratitude towards the British both politically and personally. This is not to say that he might not take a line opposed to British policy if he thought Arab interests lay that way. Is, not unnaturally, profoundly opposed to any suggestion for a monarchical régime in Syria.

116. *Rayess, Munir al*

Born Hama in 1899. Sunni. Cousin of Najib (q.v.). Strong Nationalist. Joined Palestine rebels in 1936 and became second in command to Fauzi Qawekji. Appointed head of the Secret Police (i.e., political) by the Nationalist Government in 1938 and in that capacity aided Palestine rebels. Dismissed a few months later on charges of brutality. Condemned to twenty years' prison and twenty years' banishment for plotting against life of Bahij al Khatib (head of Council of Directors) in 1939, but released in 1940 at intervention of Italian Armistice Commission. Fled in June 1941 on Allied approach and broadcast for Germans from Athens; returned to Syria at the end of 1945 and is chief editor of *Barada* in partnership with Georges Phares (q.v.).

A dangerous agitator and intriguer, associated with the Arab Club, League of National Action and the ex-Mufti.

117. *Rayess, Najib el*

Cousin of Munir (q.v.). Born Hama 1898. Sunni. Proprietor and editor of *Qabaa*, a strongly Nationalist organ. His paper has been suspended at various times for its violent attitude, notably in 1938 for its attitude towards Palestine troubles. In 1939 condemned to twenty years' prison and twenty years' banishment for implication in plot to murder Bahij al Khatib (head of Council of Directors). Amnestied November 1940 on intervention of Italian Armistice Commission. In Vichy year was anti-Allied. Arrested, but soon released by Allies in February 1942. Rearrested in June 1942 for his share in Jamil Mardam's (q.v.) false claims to Allied support. Released March 1943. Elected Deputy for Damascus on Shukri Quwatli's list in 1943; member of journalists' delegation which visited London in July 1945. A strong Nationalist, he and his paper now support Shukri Quwatli.

118. *Reslan, Mazhar Pasha*

Born about 1883. Native of Hama. During 1914 war was Kaimakam of Mosul. After war was made Director of Education under Faisal Government. Subsequently was appointed Mohafiz of Deir ez Zor. In April 1921, after the establishment of the Amirato

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of Transjordan, he was appointed judicial adviser by the Amir, and was later made financial adviser. In July 1921 Reslan formed a new Government, with himself as Chief Minister. He was replaced by Rikabi in March 1922, yet returned to power in February 1923, but resigned in September of the same year. He subsequently held office as Minister of Finance, but in May 1924 he again threw his hand in and came back to Syria. In 1926, however, he fled the country after having been implicated in the 1925 revolt. He returned in 1928, was Deputy for Homs in the Constituent Assembly of 1928 and again in 1932. Made Minister of Justice and Education (1932-33). Appointed the first Mohafiz of Latakia, under "Nationalist" Government, in January 1937. Attached temporarily to the headquarters of the Nationalist bloc, December 1937. Minister of Interior in the fifteen-day Ministry of Lutfi Hafiar, 1939, and again in the Boukharri Government, March to May 1939. Deputy for Homs 1943. Minister of Supply and Public Works and Ravitaillement under Saadullah Jabri (August 1943-October 1944). His Department was accused of inefficiency and he himself of having lined his pockets. Mohafiz of Latakia June 1945 to March 1946. He is a typical specimen of a Turkish-trained Arab official. He is courageous but slow-witted, holds strong Nationalistic political views, but moderates his passions in matters affecting the administration of his district or department. Is not above graft.

119. *Rikabi, Haidar*

Born about 1913. Son of the late General Rida Pasha Rikabi, C.B.E. (Governor of Damascus after the British occupation in 1918). Educated at Victoria College in Alexandria and was a teacher in Iraq until May 1941, when he returned to Syria. Was appointed Acting Director of Political Section in the Syrian Foreign Office August 1941-April 1946 but quarrelled with Jamil Mardam Bey (q.v.) who was unwilling to give him the advancement he considered he had merited. Brother of Akram Rikabi (q.v.), Secretary to Syrian delegation to U.N.O. Conference in London November 1945. Proprietor and editor of *Al Jeel*, first published April 1946. Is mildly Nationalist in outlook, although so far he has not been politically active. Speaks and writes very good English. Efficient and hard-working but conceited. A good Moslem.

120. *Sahnaoui, Jean*

Born about 1905. Greek Catholic of humble extraction. Brother of Georges (q.v.). Member of firm of Michel Sahnaoui et Fils. Appointed honorary Spanish Vice-Consul in 1936. Because prominent in Greek Catholic circles was considered pro-Italian, but in year following French collapse showed considerable signs of being pro-British. In April to September 1941 was Minister of Finance in Khalid al Azm Government. During winter of 1941-42 was engaged in large contracts for British army over which he was not too well treated—but has nevertheless made a great deal of money. Represented Syrian Chamber of Commerce at the Commercial Conference held in Chicago in 1945. Left Damascus in May for a lengthy private commercial tour of the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. His visit to the United Kingdom was strongly backed by the Department of Overseas Trade.

Amiable personality, close personal friend of Khaled el Azm (q.v.).

121. *Saleh, Sheikh Nawwaf As*

Born about 1880. Bedouin chief. Head of the Hadidiyin tribe, the largest in the Aleppo district. Sheikh Nawwaf was educated in the tribal school at Constantinople, and for the last thirty-five years has

been Chief of the Hadidiyin. Given Legion of Honour in 1925. Deputy for Aleppo Tribal Area 1936-39, also in 1943.

An acute and benevolent ruler, peace-loving and respected. His son Sattam now manages many tribal affairs.

122. *Sebai, Hani Ben Gehab*

Moslem, born about 1902. Lawyer, judge and Deputy for Homs 1943. With Hilmi Atassi (q.v.) forms a strong opposition movement to the Government; has a certain oratorical skill and impudence in public debate and does not hesitate to speak his mind in the House. Like Hilmi Atassi, he is a professed Monarchist. Almost penniless in his capacity as a judge, he has had recourse many times to those legal adjustments for money so necessary among underpaid Syrian officials.

123. *Sebai, Sheikh Mustafa al*

Born in Homs about 1915. Studied at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, where he was when Rashid Ali's rebellion took place, he was accused of having distributed a circular in Cairo calling on the Egyptian people to support the movement, was arrested by the Egyptian police and detained for some two months without trial; deported from Egypt and interned by the British authorities in Palestine at Sarafand for seven months. Repatriated to Syria, where he was again interned for two years, first at Mieh-Mieh and then at Rashid; released early 1945, when he began to take a strong interest in the Moslem Brethren. For the past year he has been director of the Arab Institute in Damascus (a school run by the Moslem Brethren). He is now controller-general of the Moslem Brethren in both Syria and the Lebanon, and is one of the principal editors of *El Manar* newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Moslem Brethren.

He is an ardent Moslem and declares himself to be anti-Communist.

124. *Shu'alan, Amir Fawwaz*

Born about 1907. Grandson of Nuri, whom he succeeded on latter's death in 1942. Even before he became chief, had a strong following in the Ruwala. Treacherously slew his rival and cousin, Farhan bin Mashur, near Palmyra in April 1935. Has married both his sisters into Ibn Saud's family, one to Ibn Saud himself and the other to the Amir Saud. These matches are looked upon by the Bedouin as having a political significance in connexion with the Wadi Sirhan grazing lands and the Jaul Oasis. Was Deputy 1920-39 under the Nationalist banner.

During the British blockade of Vichy Syria (1941) conducted a remunerative contraband trade between Transjordan and Syria. During Syrian campaign he and the Ruwala remained strictly neutral, although the Vichy French gave them a number of arms which they largely surrendered on the Allied arrival in Damascus. In 1942 he was given profitable contracts by the British army. Elected Deputy for Bedouins of Damascus area 1943; visited America at the time of the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, April 1945, and spent a month in England on his way back.

Like all Bedouin, a shameless money seeker. Despite the fact that much of his earlier life was spent in Syrian and European cabarets, he is now a more dignified character, respected by the other tribal leaders and is becoming a leading force in the desert.

125. *Shamieh, Tewfik*

Born about 1880. Greek Orthodox. Head of Faisal's political bureau. One of the leaders of the

People's Party 1924, but, because he supported Sheikh Taj ed Din in 1928, the Nationalists dropped him. Minister of Public Works under the Damad 1926, and Minister of Public Works under Taj ed Din 1928-29. Minister of Finance 1931, but unemployed after the elections until June 1936, when he was appointed Mohafiz of the Empirates. Kidnapped by Jeziriot autonomists December 1937. Was still Mohafiz when Allies arrived during Syrian campaign in June 1941. He collaborated closely with Allies in settlement of the infamous Mayadin incident. Accused of peculation, he was transferred to Hama as Mohafiz 1942, but resigned almost immediately. Withdrew his candidature in 1943 elections in favour of Naim Antaki in Saadullah Jabri's first Government, August 1943 to October 1944. Suspected of being implicated in scandals connected with the export of soap.

A well-educated man with definite Nationalist outlook, who speaks English and French. Anxious to see close and friendly relations between Great Britain and the Greek Orthodox community.

126. *Shurabati, Ahmed*

Born about 1909. Student in the American University of Beirut, B.Sc., C.E., from M.I.T. (United States). Speaks besides Arabic, English, French, German and Turkish. Spent some time in the United States and collected money in the Arab cause, establishing Society for Arab Propaganda. Returned to Syria in 1930 and started tobacco-growing and other industrial enterprises in Transjordan and Syria. In 1931-32 established the League of National Action. From 1935 to 1939 worked as contractor in Egypt and Iraq. Drew the unfavourable attention of the French in 1939 by delivering speeches urging national unity and was sentenced with other members of the League of National Action to twenty years' imprisonment and twenty years' deportation. Flew to Transjordan, where he started a fishery at Akuba. Returned to Syria when the British occupied Damascus in 1941 and resumed his political activities with the League of National Action. Has remained a firm supporter of Shukri Quwatli and was elected Deputy for Damascus in August 1949. March 1945 was Minister of Education in Fares el Khoury's first Government; Minister of Education and Acting Minister of National Economy in Fares el Khoury's second Government, April to August 1945; Minister of Education and National Economy in Fares el Khoury's third Government for a few days in 1945. Minister of Education in Saadullah Jabri's third Government, April 1946, but was transferred to Ministry of National Defence in June 1946 after the resignation of Nebih Azmech. Is in close touch with the American Legation and has been recently appointed agent in Syria for General Motors.

He has considerable drive and has retained the confidence of Shukri Bey Quwatli. Married to a Lithuanian and cannot therefore under Syrian regulations hold a diplomatic appointment abroad.

Keen, active, with a Western outlook; knows how to get things done. A good-looking, rather swash-buckling type of man, friendly and easy to get on with.

127. *Shayish Abdul Karim, Emir*

Born about 1895. Chief of the Mawawi Qibliyin and has influence throughout the tribe. In 1925-26 joined the rebels against French and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Deputy 1936-39 and again in 1943. Has considerable hold over his tribe. Intelligent but a hypocrite.

128. *Shehabi, Amir Bahjat al*

Born about 1885. Moslem. Cousin of Mustafa (q.v.). Studied law in Constantinople. Given an appointment in the Damascus police during the Faisal régime, but dismissed by the French. Elected head of the Damascus Bar in 1934-36. Mohafiz of the Jezireh 1937. President of the Damascus Court of Appeal 1938, but resigned a few months later to resume his practice. Member of Iraq Defence Committee (May 1941) organised to collect money and recruits for Iraq rising. An influential Nationalist, and lawyer.

129. *Shehabi, Amir Mustafa*

Born in Damascus 1893. Of Lebanese origin (Hasbaya). Cousin of Amir Bahjat (q.v.). Studied at one of the French schools in Damascus, at Istanbul and at the Agricultural School of Châlons, France. Lieutenant under Faisal and Inspector of Agriculture. Took flight when Faisal was forced to withdraw from Syria. Returned to Syria in 1923, when he was appointed Director of State Domains. In 1934 his position as Director of State Domains was suppressed and Shehabi was attached to the Ministry of Agriculture by Sheikh Taj ed Din. In 1935 he was one of the directors of the Damascus Exhibition, and in 1936 (February to December) was Minister of Education under Ata Bey Ayoubi. He accompanied the Syrian delegation to Paris for the negotiation of the Franco-Syrian Treaty (1936) Mohafiz of Aleppo (February 1937 to March 1939) under the Cabinet of Jamil Mardam, after which he went into retirement, devoting his time to compiling an Arabic-French botanical dictionary. Appointed Minister of Finance in the Jamil Uslu Government on the 8th January, 1943. Resigned on personal grounds on the 17th March, 1943. Was appointed Minister of Finance, National Economy and Ravitaillement in Ata Ayoubi's Provisional Government, March to August 1943. Mohafiz of Latakia 1943 to 1945. Secretary-General of Prime Minister's Office December 1945 to June 1946. Appointed Mohafiz of Aleppo June 1946. In politics Amir Mustafa Shehabi is a sympathiser of the Istiklal group, but plays no active part. Enjoys reputation as a man of probity and drive. An agreeable personality, modest in demeanour but can be very obstinate.

130. *Sherif, Ihsan*

Born about 1892. Lawyer, French degree (à titre d'étranger). Secretary of the People's Party 1924. Member of the Constituent Assembly 1928, when he held most uncompromising Nationalist views. Insisted on standing for elections in 1932, thus nearly spoiling the agreement with the High Commissioner's delegate. Nationalist Deputy 1932 and 1936. Appointed Syrian member on Joint Higher Commission for Common Interests with Lebanese, January to September, 1944. Mohafiz of Aleppo September 1944 to May 1946, during which period he was successful in preventing any major clash between Syrians and French. Earned the gratitude of the Christian minorities for protecting their interests, for which he has been decorated by the Pope. Appointed first Syrian Minister to the Turkish Republic July 1945. A man of sincere convictions with a violent temper. A minor Nationalist leader, who has, however, not been active for some time.

131. *Shretah, Abdul Qader*

Born about 1890. A very rich and pious Sunni Moslem and head of one of the most important Moslem families in the Alawite Province. His family was robbed of a portion of its property by

Suleiman Murshed (q.v.) in 1939. It was restored in 1942, notably the village of Bustama. Deputy in Syrian Parliament 1937. Convinced Nationalist in politics. Arrested in November 1942 for anti-Allied sentiments and believed connexion with Axis spies: released in 1945. Haughty and truculent.

132. Sidawi, Wadi'

Born Damascus 1907. Greek Orthodox. Took law degree, Damascus 1925. Worked as assistant for seventeen years to Yusuf el Isa (q.v.) on the paper *Alef Da*, and in 1942 bought *Al Kifah* from Amin Said, but abandoned it in early 1943 to its original proprietor. Speaks English and French. Has always been staunchly pro-Allied and is particularly pro-British, even under most difficult circumstances. Very tough but good-hearted. Pleasant and quiet personality.

133. Stati, Mgr. Iyunis

Born about 1884. Of Homs. Syrian Catholic Bishop of Damascus (1933). Not a fanatical Christian, i.e., he can bear sight of Christians not members of his church. Is an ardent defender of the "minorities" cause. Generally esteemed. Pro-British in Vichy year.

134. Sulh, Afif al

Born Sidon (Lebanon) 1890. Studied law at Istanbul, but does not practise. Interested in politics and opposed the Turks before the 1914 war, during which he was Turkish officer. Accused of giving the names of the Arabs hanged by Jamal Pasha, but no proof forthcoming. Sent on a mission by M. de Jouvenel to Jebel Druze in 1926 to negotiate with leaders of the revolt. At that time, was one of the leading Nationalists willing to co-operate with the French. Organiser of the Nationalist Party in 1927. Took an active part in organising the general strike in January 1936. Was exiled by the French, but was amnestied with others in March of the same year. Deputy for Damascus, 1936 and 1943. Is now a minor leader of the Nationalist Party.

135. Urfi, Sheikh Said

Born Deir ez Zor about 1890. Sunni Moslem. Claims to be related with the Sherifian family of Mecca. Mufti of the Euphrates. Officer in Turkish army in World War but was with the Amir Faisal in Damascus in 1919 and since then has remained in close touch with leading political personalities in Iraq. Opposed the Rashid Ali Revolt in 1941. Strong pan-Arab and keen supporter of policy followed by the late King Faisal. A good orator and able to sway a crowd by sheer fanaticism. On friendly terms with the French though at heart he dislikes them intensely. Opposed to Mohamed el Fatayah (q.v.).

136. Yaziji, Toufik

Born about 1898. Christian from Kalakh. Educated Sulehurb American High School. Left Syria for Cairo in 1940, when he was on the editorial staff of *El Hilal* and *El Akram*. Has travelled in Europe and United States. Speaks English and French. Appointed second counsellor to Syrian Legation in Cairo, April 1943. Did not proceed. Left Syria for Egypt in July 1945 in connexion with the printing of the Syrian Black Book (record of alleged French misdeeds). On his return in August appointed Director of Arab Section at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Returned to Cairo with Jamil Mardam, October 1945.

An unpleasant little man but intelligent.

137. Yusuf, Mohamed Said al

Born about 1899. A Kurd and landowner. Son of Abdurrahman Pasha and hereditary chief of Kurds in Syria and Palestine. He received his education at A.U.B. and during 1914 war in Austria and Germany in company with many young Syrians who, for political reasons, were made much of by the German authorities. Speaks German, French and English, is widely read and highly cultivated, but a *flâneur*. His father had great influence among Kurds owing to his position, but he has largely lost it. Has a German wife. Of no political importance, but may have ambitions.

138. Zain ed Din, Farid

Born about 1905. A Druze of Lebanese origin. Studied at American University, Beirut, specialising in economics, and later continued his studies in England and France (Doctor of Law, Paris, 1932). Acquired Syrian nationality and joined the Nationalist bloc. In July 1938 was appointed Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. After fall of Nationalist Government, went to Beirut. Was a prominent member of the Arab Club in Damascus, the centre of pro-Nazi intrigue. In 1940-41 is believed to have been go-between for the Italian Armistice Commission and Shukri Quwatli. Arrested by Allies and interned until 1943. Director-General of Supply, January to November 1944. Syrian representative on General Supply Council, March 1944. Expert to Syrian delegation to U.N.O. Conference at San Francisco, April 1945. Syrian representative of Preliminary Committee and member of delegation to U.N.O. Conference in London, November 1945. Is believed to have lined his pockets while in Ministry of Supply.

Is xenophobe in general and in the past was pronouncedly Anglophobe; his attitude towards the British now is not clear, but he has not ceased to resent his internment in Mich Mich.

Enclosure 2 in No. 2

Names Extracted from Syrian Personalities Report of 1948

8. Ali, Emir Suleiman el.
10. Ani, Abdul Razzaq al.
13. Aractingi, Dr. Yusef.
21. Atassi, Haj Ater.
24. Atassi, Hilmi.
25. Atassi, Mukarram.
26. Atrash, Ali el.
29. Atrash, Tewfik Bey el.
31. Ayyoubi, Ata Bey al.
32. Azm, Abd al Qader.
33. Azm, Bedi al Muayyad al.
34. Azm, Ghaleb.
35. Azm, Haqqi al.
37. Azm, Nazib al Muayyad al.
38. Azm, Safouh Muayyad al.
44. Bakri, Mohammed Sami.
45. Bakri, Nassib al.
46. Barakat, Subhi.
49. Barnazi, Mustafa.
51. Barmada, Mustafa.
53. Barudi, Hilmi.
54. Bitar, Hani.
56. Chatfi, Abdullatif.
60. Dome, Michel.
61. Drabi, Sabri.
63. Fahl, Hamdi.
65. Farkuh, Abdullah.
70. Kourani, As'ad.
72. Hafnar, Wajih al.

73. Hajjiri, Ahmad el.
76. Hakko, Yusef al.
78. Halabi, Mohamed Pasha Izzeddine el.
80. Hamzawi, Said el.
81. Hanbali, Shakir al.
84. Hassibi, Abu al Ruda al.
85. Hassibi, Subhi al.
88. Hatati, Yahya.
89. Helu, Jabba el.
91. Hindieh, Henri.
98. Hussaini, Rafiq.
99. Husrieh, Izzat.
100. Hussurni, Rashid al.
101. Ibisli, Hussein al.
103. Ibrahim Pasha Hassan Fund.
104. Isa, Yusef al.
109. Jumbart, Salim.
111. Jezairi, Amir Ja'far al.
112. Jezairi, Amir Said al.
113. Jirjios, Wadhi Elias.
115. Jowhari, Tahsin al.
117. Kalhale, Habib.
118. Kailani, Abdul Qader.
119. Kailani, Nassib.
122. Kakkha, Ragheb.
124. Khatir, Haj Adib.
126. Khuzi, Aziz el.
128. Khatib, Zeki al.
133. Kurd Ali, Mohammed.
134. Kyriillos IX, Moghabghab.
135. Lhindo, Yusef.
137. Maatouk, Khalil.
139. Maatouk, Nuzhat.
140. Ma'mun, Saifud Din.
144. Mardam, Khalil.
145. Mardam, Mohammed Rashid Pasha.
146. Mardam, Sami Pasha.
147. Martini, Nebil al.
152. Mudarres, Nuri.
154. Murad, Hassan.
158. Na'asneh, Habib.
159. Naimad, Rahmo.
162. Nimr, Raphael.
164. Osmani, Ragheb.
166. Qais, Sheikh Najib.
167. Qasimi, Sheikh Ahmed al.
169. Qassab Hassan, Colonel Ibrahim.
173. Qunbar, Abdul Hamid.
174. Qunbar, Abud.
176. Rabbath, Edmond.
181. Rida, Khairi.
182. Rifat, Khalid.
184. Saba, Maecios.
185. Safieh, Majed.
186. Sahnouni, Georges.
188. Said, Riza.
189. Saouda, Philippe.
190. Sarmini, Sheikh Abdel Qader.
191. Sarraj, Dr. Mohamed.
193. Shammas, Daoud.
199. Shagha'ar, Sheikh Jamal al Din.
201. Sioufi, Mousalhin.
203. Sulahian, Hecant.
205. Tallal, Abu Suleiman, Sheikh.
206. Ulehi, Jemil.
208. Qustwani, Shukri.
211. Zarnafa, Sheikh Yahya.
212. Zade, Louis.
213. Zoubi, Mohammed Mifteh (of Yadouda).

E 388/388/89

No. 3

POLICY OF NEW SYRIAN CABINET

Mr. Eyres to Mr. Bevin. (Received 13th January)

(No. 4)

Sir,

Damascus, 6th January, 1947

With reference to my telegram No. 35 of 29th December, about the new Syrian Government, I have the honour to inform you that Jamil Bey Mardam announced the policy of his Cabinet in the Chamber of Deputies on the 30th December. His statement contained little of importance and was phrased in general terms. *Inter alia*, he made the following points:—

- (a) The present Republican régime was the most fitting and the best able to safeguard the rights of the public and of the individual.
- (b) The Government was resolved to restore the freedom of the press and would cancel all existing suspensions of newspapers.
- (c) The policy of Syria at the Arab League was one of brotherhood towards all other countries, and, in particular, towards "beloved Palestine," which they wished to help to the utmost.

- (d) The Government would embark on an economic policy to ensure a balance between imports and exports by increasing agricultural and industrial production.
- (e) The Government would give careful consideration to the provision of an adequate water supply for Aleppo.
- (f) The Government accepted the draft budget of the Ministries and Departments and, with the approval of the Chamber, would put it into effect.
- (g) The Government would study projects for the reorganisation of the Syrian University and for the provision of schools throughout the country.
- (h) The Government would support a draft bill for conscription.
- (i) The Government was convinced of the necessity for modification of the electoral law and would put forward proposals to this end during the next session.

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Some sixteen Deputies spoke in the debate which followed Jamil Bey's statement, but no direct attack was made on any part of it. A vote of confidence was given to the new Government by 58 votes to 33—the Opposition numbering amongst them three of the retiring Ministers, Khaled el Azm, Sabri Assali and Michel Lian.

2. The Druse have expressed themselves as dissatisfied with the new Government, in which there is little doubt that they had hoped to have a representative. Sultan Pasha Atrash and the Emir Hassan have done some sabre-rattling. According to Akram Gailani, in a talk in Beirut with my oriental secretary, he has been asked to visit Sultan Pasha with a view to the despatch of a deputation to King Abdullah, before his forthcoming visit to Turkey, to seek his support in overthrowing the present régime in Syria. Hrant Bey, Commandant of the Syrian Gendarmerie, paid a flying visit to the Jebel Druse and does not appear to have been wholly satisfied with what he found, though he has so far refused to be drawn on the subject. The Syrian authorities have in the past few days removed the ammunition from the Syrian Armoured Car Regiment stationed in Damascus, which, as it happens, contains some 60 per cent. of Druse personnel, and it is learned

that they propose to transfer the Druse in this regiment to other units.

3. The new personalities in the Government, with the exception of Jamil Bey, appear to have been chosen more because they have few enemies than for their ability or influence inside or outside Parliament. For the time being at least the Government can maintain a majority only by the continuance of the parliamentary support of Saadullah Bey Jabri. If for any reason, such as a major disagreement with Shukri Bey Quwatli, Saadullah should withdraw his support from the Government, it is extremely doubtful if it could carry on in its present form, and it is, therefore, possible that as soon as the budget has been passed there will be a reshuffle by which a staunch supporter or a relative of Saadullah will be brought in. Should this occur, it is likely that another representative of the parliamentary opposition, such as Nazim Qudsi, will be included to maintain the coalition character of the Government.

I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Cairo, Bagdad, Beirut, Amman, Jerusalem and Jeddah.

I have, &c.

H. M. EYRES.

E 1282/595/89

No. 4

CONVERSATION WITH FARIS BEY

Syrian-Turkish Relations

Mr. Bevin to Mr. Eyres (Damascus)

(No. 18)
Sir,

*Foreign Office
8th February, 1947*

Faris Bey, Syrian Delegate to the Palestine Conference, spoke to me about Alexandretta at lunch on 30th January. He said that his desire was not to take this problem to an international body but rather that we should use our good offices to get the Turks and the Syrians to a meeting in order to discuss the problem in a friendly way. I was not conversant with

the whole of the problem, but his main contention was that the French had arrived at this Agreement with the Turks as a mandatory Power without the authority of Syria and without the approval of the League of Nations, and that Syria had never accepted it. I undertook to look into the matter.

I am, &c.

ERNEST BEVIN.

E 1282/595/89

No. 5

SYRIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

Mr. Bevin to Sir D. Kelly (Angora)

(No. 103)

Foreign Office,

(Telegraphic)

12th December, 1947.

Your telegram No. 60 [of 30th January: Turco-Syrian relations].

Turkish Ambassador called on the Minister of State on 30th January to enquire whether we had any information about the reported approach to His Majesty's Government by the Syrian Government regarding Alexandretta, and in particular the possibility of the Syrians taking the question to an international body. He was told that we had not yet received such an approach, but that he would be kept informed if we received any official communication from the Syrian Government.

2. The Syrian delegate to the Palestine Conference, Faris Bey, spoke to me that same day on the subject, and later explained his Government's views more fully to Sir R. Howe. The Syrian Government had recently made an approach to the Turkish Government (apparently not on an official basis) to ascertain whether the latter would be willing to discuss the question with a view to arriving at an amicable solution on the basis of some compromise satisfactory to the Syrians. The Turkish Government had sent back a flat refusal and the Syrian Government were now anxious that His Majesty's Government should advise the Turks that their proposal was much the best way of dealing with this matter, since, in the event of a continued Turkish refusal to discuss the matter at all, the Syrian Government would have no option but to take it to the United Nations, though they were very anxious not to have to do this, particularly in view of the danger that Soviet Russia would exploit the conflict for her own purposes. Faris Bey had also asked the State Department whether they would give the same advice

to the Turkish Government and the latter had promised to let him have a reply when he returns to the United States, which he is shortly doing.

3. When the Turkish Ambassador saw Sir Orme Sargent on 6th February he again raised the question of Alexandretta. Sir O. Sargent told him that it would be deplorable from everybody's point of view if this matter were taken to U.N.O. and suggested that the right course would be for Turkey and Syria to get talking together. The ambassador did not take this at all well. His Government would not yield to blackmail; the Syrians, he said, were being encouraged by the Russians to reopen this question in order that they might put pressure on Turkey from yet another quarter; if the Turkish Government were to be drawn into discussion on the territorial question, the Russians would at once use this as a precedent for demanding discussion about Kars and Ardahan; and as for U.N.O., the Turkish Government would just defy it if it tried to intervene. Sir Orme Sargent continued to press the ambassador to take a more reasonable view, arguing that the Syrians felt so strongly on the subject that they needed no incitement by the Russians to raise it, and that, although it was a matter of prestige and national pride for the Syrians, there was a lot that his Government could discuss with them in the matter of special economic and face-saving arrangements in Alexandretta, without touching on the territorial question at all. The ambassador remained obdurate—except that he did not repeat his threat about U.N.O.—and ended up by saying that he was very disappointed at our attitude, implying that he had hoped that His Majesty's Government would have promised Turkey full support in the face of this "Russo-Syrian attack."

E 1349/1349/89

No. 6

TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES IN SYRIA

Mr. Eyres to Mr. Bevin. (Received 13th February)

(No. 20)

Damascus,

Sir,

1st February, 1947

With reference to the Weekly Political Summary for Syria and the Lebanon No. 214 of 14th May last, Section 2, regard-

ing trade union activities in Syria. I have the honour to inform you that a member of my staff recently had a conversation with Izzat Hassrieh and Subhi el Khatib, both of whom are leading Syrian trade unionists

and the latter of whom is at present secretary of the Central Executive of the Syrian Trade Unions.

2. The two trade unionists said that trade unions exist in all the main towns such as Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Deir-ez-Zor. These syndicates elect a Central Executive of Trade Unions, which is responsible for sending representatives to International Trade Union Conferences. The trade union movement is protected by the Labour Law No. 279 of 11th June, 1946, and the present policy of the Government is to encourage workers who do not already belong to a syndicate to join one. Disputes are referred to arbitration committees, and only if no agreement can be reached by the arbitration committee do the workers strike. All the members of a syndicate contribute to its funds, and these contributions are used to cover overhead expenses such as offices, &c., and the balance is retained for strike pay. The number of syndicates in Damascus at present does not greatly exceed fifty, but is expected shortly to increase to 100. Similar increases are anticipated in the other towns.

3. Izzat Bey and Subhi Bey were anxious to emphasise that Communist influence in the Damascus trade unions was negligible. Proof of this was that during the recent elections held for syndicate officials no Communists were elected. Two Syrian Communist trade unionists did attend the International Trade Union Conference in Paris in September 1945, but they were invited and their expenses were paid by the French. They in no way represented the trade union movement in Syria. The Central Executive did not take part in the celebrations held after their return from Paris in October. Subhi Bey was convinced that the Communist movement in the Levant States came within the orbit of the French Communist organisation, and he thought that this organisation also controlled the Communist parties in other countries in the Near East, such as Palestine and Egypt. He believed that the Palestinian and Egyptian Communist representatives to the September 1945 Paris Conference attended under French

auspices in the same way as did the Syrian and Lebanese ones. The French official missions in the Levant States had no connexion with these activities, but the instructions to the Communists came here direct from the central organisation in France. Similarly, the two men did not believe that the Soviet Legation in Syria had any direct connexion with Communist workers in this country. Subhi Bey and Izzat Bey made it clear that the Syrian trade union movement was anxious to keep itself entirely free from any form of foreign control. They added that most of the Communists in this country were either Kurds or Armenians and that very few Arabs, either Moslem or Christian, were Communists.

4. The two men said that, at least for the present, they wished to keep the trade union movement clear of politics. Among their members they included supporters of the National *bloc*, the "Ikhwan al Muslimeen" and various Christian organisations. The trade union movement had not yet decided whether they would sponsor candidates in the parliamentary elections to be held in June, and their decision depended to a certain extent on whether the new Electoral Law, shortly to be introduced, provided for one-degree or two-degree elections. Their movement was in favour of one-degree elections. They mentioned that eventually they hoped to put up parliamentary candidates who would have a definite Labour programme, but that at present they were moving warily because they did not want their activities to be curtailed by the Government for alleged Leftist tendencies. They realised, however, that it was important eventually for a party to exist in the Syrian Parliament whose primary policy should be the improvement of social conditions.

I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Paris, Moscow, Cairo, Beirut and to the High Commissioner for Palestine, and British Middle East Office.

I have, &c.

H. M. EYRES.

R 2927/68/44

No. 7

CONVERSATION WITH MR. ACIKALIN (TURKISH AMBASSADOR)

Mr. Bevin to Sir D. Kelly (Angora)

(No. 49)
Sir,

*Foreign Office,
3rd March, 1947*

The Turkish Ambassador came to see me to-day. He said that intense Russian propaganda in Turkey was making things very difficult for his Government. One of the points made was that Great Britain had entered into some kind of understanding with the Soviet Union regarding the Straits. I told the Ambassador that there was no truth in this report and he could so inform his Government. His Government must have confidence that, if any suggestion were made to us about the Straits, we should immediately inform our Allies. Mr. Acikalin said that for his part he knew the report to be incorrect, but he had to make the enquiry.

2. The Ambassador then mentioned Syria and said that there had been rumours that we had come to an arrangement with Syria with regard to Alexandretta. I replied that there had been no discussion and no arrangement. When the Syrian representatives to the Palestine Conference

were here they had mentioned to me that they would like to have a meeting with Turkish representatives about the matter rather than take it to the United Nations. But, beyond that, nothing had been said.

3. The Ambassador next asked whether I could give him any information as to what we were likely to do in Palestine. I replied that we adhered to the policy to refer the question to the United Nations. Any settlement was very difficult while the Jews claimed that Palestine must be a Jewish State. We felt that that was not incorporated in the Mandate, and if the Jews held to their claim, or, alternatively, if the Arabs claimed that Palestine should be an Arab State, then the position must be made clear.

4. Before the Ambassador left I assured him that, should any question be raised in Moscow affecting Turkey, I would immediately let the Turkish Government know.

I am, &c.

ERNEST BEVIN

E 1878/388/89

No. 8

CONVERSATION WITH EMIR ADEL ARSLAN (SYRIAN MINISTER OF EDUCATION)

Mr. Bevin to Mr. Scrivener (Damascus)

(No. 28)
Sir,

*Foreign Office,
3rd March, 1947*

I received the Emir Adel Arslan, Syrian Minister of Education and one of the Syrian delegates to the Palestine Conference, with the Syrian Minister, on 28th February.

2. The Emir Adel Arslan began by raising the question of further Jewish immigration into Palestine. He emphasised that, even if a further 100,000 Jews were admitted, that would not satisfy the Zionists. The Arabs could not rely on this proving the last word.

3. I replied that I was studying the question with a view to enabling the Palestinians to take over their own Government. If we could work out an agreed basis on which Arabs and Jews could govern themselves, I was sure that our

Arab friends would not stand out on the question of an additional 60,000 immigrants over and above the present quota. The moderate Jews likewise were willing to accept a reasonable arrangement and it was only American Jewry which made things so difficult. I would now have to give my attention to other matters at Moscow, but I would take the opportunity there of speaking to General Marshall about the Palestine problem. Finally, I mentioned that Azzam Pasha was being unduly vocal about Palestine, a view which my visitors appeared to accept.

4. The Emir then mentioned the future of Libya, which he suggested should either be given to Egypt (in the same way as the Dodecanese, also part of the old Ottoman Empire, had been given to Greece), or made independent. I replied that the deputies

of the Four Powers would very soon begin work on this question now that the Italian treaty had been signed, and a Four-Power Commission would doubtless be sent to Libya. If the deputies could not reach a decision within a year, the matter would go to the United Nations. Meanwhile, did not the Syrians think that Great Britain, who had spent so much blood and treasure in the African war, should have Cyrenaica? There was no reply to this.

5. The Emir then mentioned the question of the difference of opinion between the French and the Levant States Governments about the franc backing of the local currencies. I pointed out that our attitude had been fully explained to the Syrian and Lebanese Ministers by representatives of the Treasury at a recent meeting. We hoped that the Levant States would reach a satisfactory agreement with the French Government on this question. The Emir did not press the matter further.

6. The Emir then spoke of Alexandretta. Shortly before the French Government finally ceded the whole territory to Turkey, he himself had been working on a scheme by which the sanjak should be partitioned. He still appeared to think that a partition acceptable to both sides could be arrived at. In any case, Syria could not meet

recent Turkish requests that she should waive all her rights in this territory. I replied that I had not been able to study fully recent developments in this matter. I would do so, and hoped that it would be possible for His Majesty's Ambassador to have a word with the Turks about this question.

7. Finally, the Emir urged the importance of supplying Syria with armoured vehicles for her gendarmerie, mainly in order to police the frontier. The Syrian Government were losing a great deal of money in contraband at present. I replied that Syria had been supplied with a good deal of equipment already; the present request for armoured cars was being carefully considered, but one main difficulty was that, now that surplus stocks were exhausted, it might take some time to provide new equipment. I would recommend that this matter be looked into, with a view to expediting supply.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to the British Middle East Office and to His Majesty's representatives at Beirut, Angora, Paris, Cairo, Jedda, Amman, Bagdad and Washington.

I am, &c.

ERNEST BEVIN.

E 2793/2793/89

No. 9

ANNUAL REPORT ON SYRIA, 1946

Mr. Eyres to Mr. Bevin. (Received 1st April)

(No. 33)

Sir, *Damascus, 21st March, 1947*

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a political review of events in Syria during the year 1946, for the writing of which I am much indebted to the Oriental Secretary, Mr. Dundas.

I am sending copies of this despatch and enclosure to His Majesty's Minister, Beirut, and His Majesty's Consul, Aleppo.

I have, &c.

H. M. EYRES.

Enclosure in No. 9

Annual Political Review for the Year 1946

At the beginning of 1946 French garrisons remained in Aleppo, Lattakia and

Mezzé, near Damascus, and British troops were stationed in all the principal towns of Syria. Feeling was running high against the Anglo-French Evacuation Agreement of 13th December, 1945, in which the Syrians saw an indefinite continuation of the presence of French troops, at least in the Lebanon, and feared a recurrence of the events of 1920. Incidents between the French and the local population were a daily occurrence. While amongst responsible Syrians there was no doubt that British forces would eventually be withdrawn, the deepest suspicion remained of French intentions and the Syrian and Lebanese Governments decided to put before the Security Council their demand for the immediate withdrawal of French troops from the Levant States. As a result of oral representations by His

Majesty's Minister the demand included the withdrawal of British troops as well, though the President and Prime Minister begged for an undertaking that British forces would not be withdrawn before those of the French.

2. At the meeting of the Security Council in London in February, though no "decision" was reached, the British and French Governments agreed to act upon the motion approved by the majority of members "that foreign troops in Syria and Lebanon will be withdrawn as soon as practicable [and] that negotiations to that end will be undertaken by the parties without delay." In consequence, following agreement between the British and French military authorities, all British and French forces were withdrawn from Syria, the final contingent leaving Damascus on 15th April. Celebrations, to which all member States of the Arab League sent delegations, were held in Damascus on 17th and 18th April.

3. The Syrian Government then found itself for the first time with the sole responsibility for maintaining order and security. Its means were inadequate, the security forces having been largely recruited by the French from elements hostile to the Syrian Government and grouped to hold down the Syrians rather than to maintain internal security. They were short of officers and shorter still of arms and equipment. The Syrians asked for a British or an American training mission, but, receiving no help, found themselves compelled to rely on their own resources. But, apart from a few minor incidents, public security, particularly in the tribal areas, has been maintained throughout the year at a very high level, and credit must be given to Saadullah Jabri for this achievement. A successful operation was conducted against Suleiman Murshed and his followers in the Alouite mountains and Suleiman Murshed and two of his followers were hanged for various offences against the public and the armed forces of the State.

4. The various minorities have had little cause for complaint during the year and are in general satisfied with their condition. The Druzes have done some sabre rattling and have maintained close contact with Amman; they have had a good year's smuggling and have produced a record quantity of hashish but the Syrian Government has not up to the present possessed the means to suppress this traffic.

5. Communist influence has not greatly increased, except perhaps in the Aleppo

area, whence some 7,000 Armenians emigrated to Soviet Armenia during the year accompanied by some 3,000 from Damascus. This lack of progress by the Communists may be attributed to the fact that on the whole security has been excellent, unemployment has not been high and food has been plentiful; any deterioration in these factors would probably result in increased support for communism.

6. In October a number of legislative decrees defining the powers of the various Ministries were published in the *Official Journal*. A decree giving very wide powers to the Minister of the Interior created widespread dissatisfaction and afforded, for once, common ground for all elements opposed to Saadullah Jabri's Government. The offending articles of the decree were withdrawn, but the Government was weakened and later resigned. Jamil Mardam Bey was asked to form a new Cabinet in the last few days of the year.

7. As a result of the events of May 1945 and the withdrawal of French civilians from Syria the Mixed Courts ceased to function. During the first part of 1946 the question of the abolition of the Mixed Courts in so far as they affected the rights of British subjects was discussed by Mr. Besly, lately legal counsellor to His Majesty's Ambassador in Cairo, with the Syrian Government. It was eventually agreed that His Majesty's Government would accept that the Syrian courts were competent to deal with matters concerning British nationals providing that certain arrangements were made to deal with cases already pending before the Mixed Courts and safeguards were given in the matters of personal status. On 19th October a legislative decree was published concerning the Ministry of Justice which contained articles empowering the Syrian courts to hear all cases affecting non-Syrian nationals. On 1st and 2nd November an exchange of notes took place between His Majesty's Legation and the Syrian Government by which it was agreed that cases affecting British nationals pending before the Mixed Courts should be heard in the Syrian National Courts, but that the judges before whom they would be heard in all degrees of jurisdiction should be Syrian magistrates who had experience with the Mixed Courts, and who would therefore be able to dispose finally of the cases on the basis of the existing pleadings, thus

ensuring continuity of procedure and jurisprudence. With regard to the juridical position of British subjects in Syria, it was agreed that such subjects would come within the full jurisdiction of the Syrian National Courts, but that the Syrian Government would adopt with regard to their personal status the principle that their national law should be applied to them.

8. Economically there has been little change. The cost of living and the price of all consumer goods have risen even higher, but distress has been avoided as a result of an exceptionally good harvest and the retention by the Syrians of an organisation for a monopoly in the buying, selling and distribution of cereals.

9. At the end of May the Syrian President attended the meeting of Arab heads of State in Inshass, returning to Damascus just before the extraordinary session of the Arab League at Bladan, convened early in June to discuss the Anglo-American Commission's report on Palestine. Although the question of referring the Palestine problem to the United Nations was considered, the idea was rejected. In November Syria was elected a member of the United Nations Security Council. While Syria has taken part in the various deliberations of the Arab League and the United Nations Organisation under the premiership of Saadullah Jabri, relations with some of her neighbours have deteriorated or, at best, failed to improve. Various regulations with a xenophobe tendency were introduced during the latter part of the year, and the Mohafazats of Lattakia, Euphrates and the Jezireh were closed to foreigners, who have to obtain special permission to enter. While diplomatic relations with Turkey were established in May 1946, the return of the Hatay to Syria remains a very live problem which no Syrian Government can afford to ignore by showing friendship to Turkey. The announcement of the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty and the assumption of the title of King by the Amir Abdullah was freely criticised in the Syrian press and by the supporters of the present republican régime in Syria. The dependence in matters of finance and foreign affairs of King Abdullah on Great Britain was stressed, as were also the arrangements for allowing British forces to remain in Transjordan. Subsequently King Abdullah's obsession concerning a Greater Syria under his rule has prevented any improvement of

relations with Transjordan. The Syrian President and leading members of the Government cannot understand His Majesty's Government's policy of neutrality in this matter and repeatedly enquire why His Majesty's Government does not give its full support to the existing régime and the maintenance of the *status quo*. Resentment at King Abdullah and his Ministers' repeated pronouncements and continued contact with Syrian dissident elements has resulted in suspicion of Hashemite intentions extending to the Regent Abdul Ilah of Iraq and his Government. No Iraqi Minister has been appointed to Syria since the withdrawal of Ahmed Rawi in September and, although a Syrian Minister has been appointed to Bagdad, he has not yet proceeded. Relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia remain good. Diplomatic relations have during the year been established with Brazil, France, Switzerland, Turkey and Yugoslavia.

10. In June 1946 the Syrian Government gave their *agrément* to the appointment of M. Jean Serres as French Minister in Damascus. In his first interview with Saadullah Jabri he opened a number of controversial questions. He was warned by the Prime Minister that, while he and his staff would have official relations with the French, they would have no social contacts. Some progress has, however, been made towards a return to normal relations. Of the forty-four schools which had previously come under the direction of the *Ceuvres Françaises* all but three have reopened; the Syrians have agreed to the reopening of the French Consulate at Aleppo although they have refused to allow the opening of French Consulates elsewhere, and semi-official discussions have started with regard to property, of which the French claim ownership, and compensation for the damage done during the May 1945 events.

11. At the time of the final evacuation of Syria by British troops in April, Great Britain was held in the highest esteem throughout the country, but, while relations still remain excellent at a high level, they have suffered from the unsettled state of Palestine, the misunderstanding arising out of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty negotiations and the failure of Great Britain to supply the assistance which the Government has asked for in such matters as training and equipment of the Syrian armed forces, the provision of civil and

military training aircraft and the extension of the British Council's activities.

12. His Majesty's Government's decision, announced in November, to appoint

a British Minister accredited only to Syria was warmly welcomed as a gesture of friendship and recognition to Syria's status as an independent country.

E 4600/954/65

No. 10

CONVERSATION BETWEEN Mr. McNEIL AND THE SYRIAN MINISTER

Mr. Berin to Mr. Scrivenor (Damascus)

(No. 99)

Foreign Office,

Sir,

2nd June, 1947

The Syrian Minister called on the Minister of State on 23rd May, in order to express the apologies of his Government for the manner in which their representative on the Security Council had voted on the Corfu dispute. He said that his Government had been surprised and distressed by the attitude of their representative who had acted against his instructions.

2. Mr. McNeil said that he was exceedingly glad of the assurance because, although His Majesty's Government had laid down no conditions when they supported the Syrian Government for election to the Security Council and did not intend to lay down any conditions, they did expect the Syrian Government to respect the facts in any dispute put to the Security Council, and they had thought the facts were overwhelmingly on their side.

3. The Syrian Minister then went on to discuss the White Paper issued by King Abdulla on "Greater Syria." He said that His Government had been distressed by this, and that they had been further concerned, because they thought that King Abdulla had attempted to infer that this was done with the approval of His Majesty's Government, and that there had been much discussion in Syria and in Syrian newspapers. He asked Mr. McNeil if His Majesty's Government would take any steps to disassociate themselves.

4. Mr. McNeil told him that, of course, His Majesty's Government had not been consulted and had played no part at all in the authorship of the white paper. Mr. McNeil promised to consult with the Secretary of State to see if a Parliamentary question could be arranged, which would allay suspicion in Syria but would not reproach King Abdulla unduly, because, of course, His Majesty's Government would not seek to restrain King Abdulla

or any sovereign monarch from making such propaganda as he thought proper and fit.

5. Mr. McNeil took the opportunity to inform the Syrian Minister that His Majesty's Government were disturbed, not only because they were an interested party, but because they were always concerned with the real welfare of the Middle East and of the Middle Eastern countries, and also because it seemed that the Syrian representative on the Security Council was apparently going to take his instructions from the Arab League on the Egyptian question.

6. Mr. McNeil told him that His Majesty's Government made no complaint about Egypt going to the Security Council and that they were satisfied from their enquiries that Egypt would be tossed out by an overwhelming vote. Mr. McNeil hoped, however, that the Syrian Government would reflect upon the fact that, since His Majesty's Government were going to base their case upon the sanctity of treaties mutually and freely negotiated except where such treaties, in the opinion of the Security Council, were a threat to peace, if the Syrian Government supported the Egyptian application, then other Powers at other times might utilise this precedent to say that treaties between Middle East Powers and the Great Powers might be invalidated at any time by the Security Council.

7. Mr. McNeil thought that the Syrian Minister was a little surprised by this. The Syrian Minister took some pains to make sure that he had taken the point clearly.

8. Mr. McNeil also made the point that His Majesty's Government had offered Egypt a place in which she might exert an equality in the defence of the Middle East and develop implications of the Sudan question in relation to Palestine. Mr. McNeil discovered, however, that the

Syrian Minister and his Government are apparently keenly aware of what support of the Egyptian claim over the Sudanese might mean in terms of the Palestinian Arabs and that they are giving this question an urgency in their thinking.

9. Mr. McNeil understood from the Syrian Minister, that their previous Foreign Minister will be here in London on his way back from New York next week and that they are intending to have a fur-

ther discussion with him upon the repercussions of support for Egypt on the Palestinian question.

10. I am sending copies of this despatch to the Permanent United Kingdom Representative to the United Nations, His Majesty's Ambassadors at Athens, Bagdad, Belgrade and Cairo, and His Majesty's Ministers at Beirut, Amman and Jedda.

I am, &c.

ERNEST BEVIN.

E 5291/5291/89

No. 11

BOLIVIAN RECOGNITION OF SYRIAN REPUBLIC

(1)

Mr. Rees to Mr. Bevin. (Received 18th June)

(No. 100)

(Telegraphic)

My telegram No. 68.

By decree just published, dated 9th June, Bolivia recognises Syrian Republic. Please advise Damascus.

La Paz, 17th June, 1947

E 5201/5201/89

(2)

Mr. Bevin to Mr. Scrivener (Damascus)

(No. 324)

(Telegraphic)

Repeated to Beirut, No. 33, Saving.

Bolivia has recognised Syrian Republic by decree dated 9th June.

Foreign Office, 24th June, 1947.

E 5485/478/89

No. 12

SYRIA: ECONOMIC REPORT FOR MAY 1947

(Communicated in Damascus Despatch No. 69 E. of 16th June; Received 25th June)

(Extract)

1. Cereals

Accurate figures regarding the size of the 1947 crop are still unobtainable, but it is generally believed that this year's crop may be below average and, in any case, considerably less than last year's, which was exceptionally good. In the meantime pessimistic statements by members of the Syrian Government, and press reports about the poor outlook, have contributed to creating some anxiety in the Lebanon. Partly as a result of this, the Lebanese have endeavoured to cover some of their 1947-48

requirements from elsewhere than Syria, but it was considered here that this action was premature, possibly partly dictated by local price and other Syro-Lebanese considerations, and this was reported to the Foreign Office.

Meanwhile Syria has agreed to supply immediately 15,000 tons of wheat to the Lebanon at £Syr. 470 per ton, to increase their reserves to cover the gap before the new crop becomes available.

A Bill ensuring the continuation of the M.I.R.A. grain-collecting organisation up to 25th June, 1948, was passed by the Chamber of Deputies during the course of

the month, and prices at which it could purchase cereals were approved as follows:—

	£Syr. Per ton
Wheat	340
White barley	205
Black barley	200
White corn-flour... ..	250
Yellow corn-flour	270

In connexion with M.I.R.A. it is of interest to note that the British adviser's (Lieut.-Colonel Harvey) contract has also been renewed for one year. Furthermore, responsibility for M.I.R.A. has been transferred from the Ministry of National Economy to the Ministry of Finance.

It was reported in the press that an agreement had been reached between Syria

and India whereby the former would obtain jute sacks and the latter 7,000 tons of black barley.

2. Petroleum

Throughout the month Syro-Lebanese negotiations for an agreement concerning the Transarabian Company's pipe-line and terminal have continued, and on several occasions the press has announced a date for the signature of the agreement, but, so far, these announcements have been followed by further postponements.

The press has reported the discovery of oil near Lattakia. There are no indications that this report has any serious foundations, and it is probably the result of routine investigations by I.P.C. personnel in that area.

F 9086/45/62

No. 13

SYRIAN-INDONESIAN TREATY

Mr. Scrivener to Mr. Bevin. (Received 5th July)

(No. 279)

(Telegraphic)

Damascus,

4th July, 1947.

Beirut telegram No. 477.

Official communiqué announced signature in Damascus on 2nd July of Treaty of

Friendship between Syria and the Indonesian Republic.

E 6172/4587/89

No. 14

HEADS OF FOREIGN MISSIONS IN SYRIA, 1947

Mr. Scrivener to Mr. Bevin. (Received 14th July)

(No. 81. Confidential)

Sir,

Damascus, 3rd July, 1947

With reference to the Eastern Department's letter No. E 4587/4587/89 of 14th June, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a report on the heads of foreign missions in Damascus. As you will see, I have divided the report into three sections: (a) ministers resident in Damascus, (b) *chargés d'affaires* accredited as such and *chargés d'affaires* representing ministers normally resident in Beirut, and (c) ministers accredited to Syria but resident elsewhere.

I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives in Beirut and Cairo.

I have, &c.

P. S. SCRIVENER

Enclosure in No. 14

(A)

Ministers Resident in Damascus

France

M. Jean Serres, 7th August, 1946.

M. Serres came to Syria from Afghanistan, and served his apprenticeship in Morocco. He has also served in Spain. During the war he was in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at Vichy.

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M. Serres has a difficult and thankless task in this country, where hatred of everything French is still extremely strong. He performs it with discretion and firmness, and with a good deal of dignity. He professes to be an ardent believer in Anglo-French collaboration in this part of the world. He is extremely intelligent and an attractive conversationalist. Mme. Serres has a reserved and rather sour personality, which may be the result of poor health or hostile environment, or both. She has a daughter, Mlle. Viret, who professes strong pro-Russian sympathies, a fact which provides much material for Damascene gossip. M. Serres and I see a good deal of each other, but it is perhaps too much to hope that he does not suspect me of working, somehow or other, against his country.

Saudi Arabia

Sheikh Aboul Aziz bin Zeid, 26th June, 1944.

I have not yet succeeded in meeting the Sheikh, who appears to be permanently indisposed. We exchange cordial greetings at intervals through his friendly and agreeable counsellor, Sheikh Shalūr Samman.

Turkey

M. Abdulshat Aksin, 26th June, 1946.

M. Aksin came to Syria after a long period of service in the Argentine. He gives an impression of

level-headedness, wide experience and considerable capacity. He is friendly and well informed, and comments on local affairs with a humorous cynicism derived from Turkey's former domination of this country. He is married to a very agreeable wife.

(B)

Chargé d'affaires Resident in Damascus

(i) *Chargé d'affaires Accredited as such*

Iraq

M. Ibrahim Fadli. 8th November, 1945.
An agreeable personality, but I should doubt whether he cuts much ice here. I gather that an Iraqi Minister may be appointed shortly. M. Fadli is married.

United States

Mr. James S. Moose, Jun., 24th February, 1947.
Mr. Moose has served for a long time in the Middle East, and he and his wife will be well known to many of His Majesty's Representatives. I have found him frank and helpful. He is leaving very shortly on transfer to Washington, where I gather he will fill a post analogous to that of our inspectors.

(ii) *Chargé d'affaires Representing Ministers Residing in Beirut*

Belgium

M. Leopold Pecher. First secretary.
M. Pecher appears somewhat old for his rank. He is a charming little man, and very friendly behind a rather "protocolaire" exterior. M. Pecher is married.

Egypt

Osman Hilmi Bey. Second secretary.
A good, representative type of younger well-educated Egyptian. Speaks excellent English and is superficially friendly. He and his wife are both in fact Anglophobe, I gather from conviction rather than prevailing fashion.

Persia

M. Bagher Fahimi. Counsellor.
I do not yet know M. Fahimi well enough to attempt an appreciation.

Soviet Union

M. Isak Issagouloff. Counsellor.
A grim and tough-looking individual, whose French gives out after three sentences, but who, in conversation through an interpreter, has always been perfectly agreeable. He is reputed to represent the N.K.V.D., and well he might. M. Issagouloff is married.

(C)

Ministers Accredited to Syria but Resident Elsewhere

Belgium

Comte Godfrey d'Aspremont Lynden. 8th January, 1947.
Resides in Beirut. Is represented in Damascus by a chargé d'affaires—see under (B).

Brazil

M. Luis Fernandes Pinheiro. 9th April, 1946.
Resides in Beirut.

Czechoslovakia

M. Frantisek Dachtik. 13th February, 1947.
Resides in Beirut.

Egypt

Abdul Rahman Hakki Bey. 21st January, 1946.
Resides in Beirut. Is represented in Damascus by a chargé d'affaires—see under (B).

Greece

M. Georges Triandafyllides. 24th June, 1947.
Resides in Cairo.

Persia

Mr. Zein-el-Abdine Rahnéma. 12th November, 1946.
Resides in Beirut. Is represented in Damascus by a chargé d'affaires—see under (B).

Poland

M. Zygmunt Wacław Kuligowsky. 15th April, 1947.
Resides in Cairo.

Soviet Union

M. Daniel Solod. 26th October, 1945.
Resides in Beirut. Is represented in Damascus by a chargé d'affaires—see under (B).

Sweden

M. Widar Bagge. 24th June, 1947.
Resides in Cairo.

Switzerland

M. Alfred Brunner. 7th May, 1946.
Resides in Cairo.

Yugoslavia

M. Esref Badnjevic. 18th May, 1946.
Resides in Cairo.

Enclosure in No. 15

Economic Notes for June 1947

Syria

Agriculture

Food and Agriculture Organisation (U.N.O.)

On 14th June a delegation of the above organisation, headed by Hafnawi Pasha, arrived in Damascus and stayed several days for discussions with the Syrian Government. The delegation included Dr. Abdu Abbas Bey, professor of hygiene at Farouk University, Alexandria, and a Mr. Bennett. The delegation was received by the Minister of National Economy and Health, and exchanged views with senior officials of the Ministry on Syrian food, agricultural and health problems.

The following is a translation of the text of a statement given by Hafnawi Pasha to a local Arabic newspaper:—

"Syria is an agricultural country and, if her resources are well and efficiently exploited, may become one of the best agricultural countries. I shall make my report on the food situation in the Middle East and on the agricultural possibilities in these countries. In the light of this report the F.A.O. will decide the extent of the technical and financial help to be rendered to each of these countries. The F.A.O. is one of the oldest of the U.N.O. bodies. Its aim is to improve agricultural production on an economic and technical basis with a view to raising the standard of living. Most countries are in need of technical help in order best to exploit their agricultural and industrial possibilities. As regards financial help, the F.A.O. will recommend to the International Bank the extent of the help required and the envisaged possibilities of each country which is a member of the U.N.O., and in the light of such a recommendation the International Bank will make loans to these countries at their request. We shall visit Lebanon and Iraq also, but not Palestine or Trans-jordan, because the latter two countries are not members of the U.N.O."

Dinner parties were held by both the Egyptian Legation and the Ministry of National Economy in honour of the delegation.

It has been ascertained that, as a result of the visit, the Director-General of the

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Syrian Ministry of National Economy has proposed to the Council of Ministers that a special body should be organised to co-operate with the F.A.O.—by the latter may be meant a regional organisation of the F.A.O.—and that this body should be composed of the Director-General himself, the Directors of the Departments of Agriculture, and Labour, Industry and Commerce, and the Presidents of the Chambers of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry. It is not likely that this proposal has been considered yet as the elections have intervened.

A report in the *Egyptian Mail* of 24th June indicates that a "branch" of the F.A.O. attached to the "Middle East Centre in Cairo" is to be set up in Syria.

Cereals

It is, as yet, too early to estimate the situation accurately. Information obtained up to the end of June seems to indicate that the Government grain-collecting organisation (M.I.R.A.) may be able to collect some 100,000 tons, which, with about 80,000 tons in stock, should go most of the way towards ensuring both the requirements of Syria and the Lebanon for the 1947-48 season. However, the quantity which can be collected remains uncertain, and one must await the results of further investigations, which are in process of being carried out, before being able to form a definite opinion.

Nitrates

A responsible official of the Ministry of Public Works has indicated that the Government is considering a scheme whereby a source of hydro-electric power between Homs and Hama could be exploited to furnish electric power to the region of Hama. According to experts attached to the Ministry, there are ample supplies of nitrates in the Hama area, which, if developed, should make Syria more or less self-sufficient as regards fertilisers. The opinion of an Egyptian expert is awaited to decide whether the project is practicable, in which case, the Ministry's spokesman stated, it would be carried out in 1948.

Foreign Experts

Press reports indicate that a Mr. Pickett, in the United States, has accepted an appointment as agricultural adviser to the Syrian Department of Agriculture.

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E 6432/478/89

No. 15

SYRIA: ECONOMIC REPORT FOR JUNE 1947

Mr. Scrivener to Mr. Bevin. (Received 19th July)

(No. 83 E.)

Sir, *Damascus, 14th July, 1947*

With reference to my despatch No. 69 E. of 16th June, I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the Economic Notes for

June 1947, prepared by the commercial secretary.

I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Export Promotion Department.

I have, &c.

P. S. SCRIVENER.

Aviation

Syrian Airways

The Government-sponsored Syrian company have approached the Palestine Government to obtain permission to run a service between Syria and Palestine, and this legation was requested by the Palestine authorities to indicate along what lines an agreement could be arrived at. The main point on which agreement was sought was that, if fifth freedom rights were granted by the Palestine Government to the Syrian Airways Company, these rights would have to be withdrawn when a Palestine airways company should be in a position to ensure the services flown under the fifth freedom rights. So far, the Syrian Government have made no reply to these proposals, and it is thought that this may either be due to election considerations or to the fact that the Palestine authorities consider that the Syrians should not subordinate their agreement to grant reciprocal rights to whether the Palestine aircraft are manned by Palestine Arab or Jewish crews. This latter point has been a bone of contention in the past, and it remains to be seen whether economic and practical considerations will, in the end, override the political aspects of the problem.

Customs Duties

An official decree has been published by virtue of which imports of aircraft and aircraft parts by a national airways company are exempted from customs duties.

Air Transport of Pilgrims

The Syrian Airways Company are reported to be considering running a service for the transport of pilgrims from Syria to Jeddah. Though the company's operational means are limited (two Dakota aircraft at present), there seems to be some serious intent behind this idea, and it is possible that the carrying capacity may be increased by the purchase or hire of supplementary aircraft. If so, it is considered probable that the assistance of Pan-American Airways would be sought.

Aircraft Fuel Supplies

The Shell Company's branch in Damascus have been successful in obtaining a two-year contract from the Syrian Airways Company, as a result of which Shell should be the sole suppliers of aviation fuels to this company during this period.

Syro-Lebanese Customs Union

As expected, no move was made by either the Syrian or Lebanese Government to terminate the existing customs union (Higher Council of Common Interests) before the end of June 1947, and the existing agreement is therefore automatically renewed for another two years.

Labour Legislation

No important developments have occurred during the month, but the trend seems to be towards official action being in favour of granting border-line cases the benefit of the doubt when it comes to deciding whether certain employees should be treated as "employees" or as "manual workers," i.e., putting the employer under the obligation to pay employees in these categories, respectively, one month's or a week's salary as indemnity on termination of their contract by the employer.

Petroleum

Transarabian Pipe-Line

The press, towards the end of the month, began reporting the existence of a secret agreement between the Syro-Lebanese Governments regarding way-leave rights through Syria and a terminal on the Lebanese coast, but no official announcement confirming or infirming these reports has as yet appeared.

Oil-Drilling Operations in Syria

The Syrian Petroleum Company now have two rigs under way and a third projected for starting up in about three months' time. The operations at the rig at Tripoli are progressing satisfactorily, but mechanical breakdowns on the site north of Aleppo (Baffoun) have led to a temporary suspension of drilling for about three weeks. Operations at both working sites are not sufficiently advanced to judge whether hopes of oil being found are justified.

Public Works

Automatic Telephones Project

From the point of view of British interests, the principal new factor has been the visit to Damascus of Sir Francis Brake, a director of the Standard Telephone Company, for the purpose of negotiating to obtain a definite decision. An informal exchange of views was arranged between Sir Francis and His Majesty's Minister, from which it appeared that the

company's spokesman was completely in agreement with the legation's manner of dealing with the situation. The attitude that the matter was one in which the legation did not wish to intervene unless requested to do so by the Syrians has been maintained up to the present, and it may be said that Standard's chances of obtain-

ing the contract have not been lessened—on the contrary—by this stand. The present position, it would seem, is that Standard have gone as far as they can to meet the Syrians' views and competition (Erickson's, Sweden), and that there are now reasonable hopes of a favourable outcome from our point of view.

E 7037/388/89

No. 16

THE SYRIAN ELECTIONS

Mr. Scrivener to Mr. Bevin. (Received 5th August)

(No. 86)

Sir,

Damascus, 28th July, 1947

In continuation of my despatch No. 72 of 26th June, and with reference to my telegram No. 325 of 22nd July, I have the honour to report on the elections in Syria, of which the first stage was completed on 7th and 8th July, and which were concluded by the "ballotage" of 17th and 18th July. These were the first elections held since Syria became a fully independent State.

2. Energetic canvassing and generous distribution of programmes by individual candidates took place throughout the country in the three weeks preceding the elections, but no party programmes were issued, and party propaganda was confined to the press, where it took the negative form of scurrilous attacks on notabilities. Every former Deputy was liable, by virtue of his seat in a Parliament elected when a foreign mandatory Power was still in Syria, to be attacked as the "tool of the coloniser." In Damascus town a "Coalition National List" appeared two days before the elections containing the names of members of the National Party and of some members of the "Opposition" parties, and including the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Defence and Finance. By 7th July a "National List" was posted in all the chief towns, and lists were issued by the Opposition parties, including the Ikhwan el Muslimeen, the Liberal Party, the National Arab Party and the Arab Resurrection Party. These lists were, however, not exclusive, and the Prime Minister, for example, featured on all the Damascus town lists.

3. With the recent precedent of the Lebanese elections, the electorate were prepared for fraud, intimidation and bloodshed. In the first round, however, elections proceeded on the whole quietly and with

apparently little enthusiasm on the part of the voters. There were some seven fatal casualties throughout the country, and a certain number of minor casualties, in party brawls. So few people voted on the first day—perhaps because of their apprehensions, or perhaps because of the length of time which, in accordance with the complex procedure laid down, it takes a voter to record his vote—that voting was continued on 8th July. The Government received from all quarters a very good mark for their neutral attitude.

4. The results, which were published in full on 10th July, were surprising. In Damascus only four members of the "Coalition List" were successful; and elsewhere, though results were inconclusive owing to the large number of seats for which "ballotage" was obligatory, it appeared that the National List had been heavily defeated, contrary to all predictions. The new Chamber is to contain 136 seats. In the first stage of the elections 76 candidates were successful, of whom 40 were new members. Five results were undecided, 49 were submitted for "ballotage," and elections for the 6 Jebel Druse seats were not held owing to local disputes, on which I have reported elsewhere.

5. Presidential decrees were issued fixing 17th and 18th July as the dates for the "ballotage" and for the elections in the Jebel Druse, and during this week's grace considerable activity took place behind the scenes.

6. The President was said to have been as displeased as he was surprised at the results, and to have suspected that the Prime Minister had double-crossed him. A reliable source reported that his Excellency called a meeting which was attended by the Prime Minister and by his own supporters, including the Minister of

Defence (who had only just succeeded in the first round in obtaining enough votes to be eligible for "ballotage"), and made it clear that Jamil Mardam must play straight and not oppose the President's supporters in Damascus. A newspaper was bought over to support their cause, and paid demonstrators were mobilised.

7. On the day fixed for the "ballotage" each polling booth was guarded by eight gendarmes and ten soldiers, and, not only were unsuitable electors in many cases prevented from voting, but minor incidents were provoked under cover of which forged votes were recorded on behalf of the National List candidates. Foreseeing such activity the Ikhwan boycotted the proceedings altogether. In Damascus the National List was successful. Elsewhere the same pressure was not applied and the National List had little success; in Aleppo, for example, not a single candidate was returned from this list. With the exception of Damascus, it would be unfair to accuse the Government of exercising pressure. No major disturbances occurred anywhere in the country.

8. Final results were published on 20th July, and showed that 57 former members had been re-elected, and that there were 79 new members. The Jebel Druse elections were concluded in one stage and resulted in a victory for the Atrash over the Assali faction (see my telegram No. 270 of 1st July). There is no article in the Constitution determining the date on which the new Chamber shall assemble, but it is likely to be convened early in August. Until it meets any accurate statement of party allegiances is not possible. It seems probable that of the new Chamber some 28 Deputies will adhere to the National List and some 53 to the Opposition. The remaining 55 have no clear allegiance. All the members of the present Government have been individually re-elected.

9. In my despatch No. 72 I suggested that the main question to be answered was whether the President and Prime Minister would pull together. It seems clear that in the first round Jamil Mardam Bey—who possessed the initiative since he was himself a candidate—threw his influence covertly against the President, whilst openly appearing to work hand in hand with him. As an instance of this I have quite definite information that the Prime Minister sent the head of the gendarmerie

to Raqqa prior to the elections to ensure the success of a leading opponent of the President. This Deputy, Hamed el Khoja, was returned by a large majority in the first ballot. The President then caused the election to be declared null and void, and in the subsequent "ballotage" Khoja was defeated. In the "ballotage" the President's strong-arm tactics prevailed in Damascus. The Prime Minister, however, is well satisfied with the election results as a whole, and no doubt sees his own position strengthened at the expense of the President's. His Majesty's Legation was accused less than I had expected by the press of intervening in the elections, though we were supposed to favour (of all improbable people) the Ikhwan el Muslimeen—possibly because some of them are said to favour Greater Syria.

10. The weakness, financially and administratively, of the Opposition parties *vis-à-vis* the National List, together with the lack of any real division between the parties on broad issues of policy, makes it difficult to explain with any confidence the decision of the electorate. In the past Syrians have voted *en masse* for the one national "anti-foreign" party. It seems most probable, and it is also the opinion of my French colleague, that, now that the objects of this party have been achieved, the Syrians have tried as best they can to pick men who will carry on the internal administration capably and honestly; and in doing so they have voted for those who have not hitherto held public posts and who are not therefore under suspicion of having feathered their nests.

11. The attitude displayed by the Moslem Syrians towards the Christian Syrians is interesting. An experienced man like Faris el Khoury was supported by Moslems and Christians alike. But both in Damascus and Aleppo many Moslem voters left blank the spaces on their ballot papers reserved for Christian candidates. Some 5,000 such abstentions out of 29,000 voters were recorded in Aleppo. The implications of this attitude are not reassuring.

12. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Amman, Bagdad, Beirut, Cairo, Jerusalem, Jedda, Aleppo and to the British Middle East Office.

I have, &c.

P. S. SCRIVENER.

SYRIA AND THE PALESTINE QUESTION

Mr. Dundas to Mr. Bevin. (Received 15th December)

(No. 143)
Sir,

Damascus,
3rd December, 1947

With reference to my telegram No. 532 of 29th November and subsequent telegrams reporting events in Damascus after the United Nation's decision in favour of partition in Palestine, I have the honour to report that investigation has shown that the Syrian Government were largely responsible for organising and directing the demonstrations. For this purpose the Government made use of agents amongst the teachers, the Ulema, the Ikhwan el Muslimeen and the leaders of the various city quarters. It is probable that the particular attention paid to the Communist Party headquarters and the premises of the Friends of Soviet Russia was instigated by the Ikhwan el Muslimeen, who, as I have previously reported, have for some time shown marked anti-Communist activities.

As soon as I learnt without doubt that the Government was encouraging the demonstrators I pointed out to Muhsin Barazi, the Minister of the Interior, that his Government were playing with fire by allowing disorderly crowds to roam the streets and pressed him to take the necessary steps to prevent demonstrations taking place. Yesterday, after learning that Sir Zafarallah Khan had reminded the Syrian Government that their first duty was to govern, I sent Ibrahim Bey Debbas, the Oriental Adviser on the legation staff, to Aref Hamza, the right-hand man of the Prime Minister, to persuade him that no useful purpose could be served by a continuation of the strikes and disturbances, a fact which the Government had already begun to realise. Aref Bey promised he would himself personally visit various quarter leaders to ensure that the town reopened to-day and that the students would return to their lessons. He has been as good as his word.

There is no doubt, however, that feeling in both Damascus and Homs, from which town I have a first hand report from a British subject who has lived there for the past four years, is running high and that the more fanatical elements are entirely determined to take physical action to destroy the Jews in Palestine. It is this fanatical element which may represent a real danger to British lives and property in the future. While perhaps it is natural that the Americans and Russians should have received the brunt of the first demonstrations, it seems probable that there will be an increasing tendency in the press and in public opinion to blame Great Britain on the grounds that His Majesty's Government were originally responsible by the Balfour declaration for the present decision and have for the past twenty-five years allowed Jewish immigration into Palestine. I feel, therefore, that it is likely that anti-British feeling will gather weight in Syria and that some incident may set off renewed demonstrations which this time would have the British as their main objective. For instance, any action by British security forces in Palestine directed against the Arabs and resulting in loss of Arab lives might easily lead to immediate reprisals against the British in this country.

Apart from the report of the acting-consul in Aleppo, transmitted to you in my telegram No. 537 of 1st December, I have not learnt of any action in Syria directed against Jews or Jewish property.

I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives in Aleppo, Beirut, Jerusalem and to the British Middle East office.

I have, &c.

C. A. F. DUNDAS.

CHAPTER II.—POLITICAL SUMMARIES

E 171/171/89

No. 18

SYRIA AND LEBANON: WEEKLY POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 243

Week ending 17th December, 1946

(Received 6th January, 1947)

[EXTRACT]

General

His Majesty's Legations in Damascus and Beirut, acting on instructions from the Foreign Office, issued a communiqué to the press on 16th December that they were authorised to state that reports based on a message from a United Press correspondent that British diplomatic quarters favoured the Greater Syria movement were quite unfounded, and that the official British view was that this was a matter which exclusively concerned the Governments of Arab countries.

Economic

In North Syria very little rain has fallen until recently, and there is considerable doubt as to whether the autumn sowings of grain will give a yield.

The Czechoslovak Commercial Commission (see Weekly Political Summary No. 242, Economic), is reported in the press to have stated that Czechoslovakia can supply such articles as industrial and agricultural machinery, chemical and pharmaceutical goods, tin plate, rubber products, typewriters, printing machinery, textiles, glassware, pottery, furniture, hardware and weaving machinery, but that since there are likely to be currency difficulties the Syrian Government will study the possibility of trading on the basis of barter or extended credit.

Syria

The Syrian Cabinet has remained in a state of suspended animation during the week, with the Prime Minister, Saadullah Jabri, in Cairo. Consultations are known to be going on amongst leading politicians with a view to the formation of a new Cabinet.

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires took tea with the Syrian President on 14th December, when Shukri Bey Quwatli took the opportunity of cross-questioning him on the policy of His Majesty's Government with regard to Greater Syria. The President did not appear satisfied with the statement that His Majesty's Government were neither for nor against any such project; he somewhat plaintively pointed out

that Syria, under a Republican régime, had made every endeavour to strengthen her relations with Great Britain, and had asked for a military mission, educational assistance and for advisers and had done everything to import manufactured goods (but with little success) from the United Kingdom; why, therefore, was His Majesty's Government "neither for nor against" the Syrian Republican régime? The *démenti* mentioned in section 1 appears to have reassured him.

During the sitting of the Chamber on 12th December a statement was read from the Minister of Public Works that he had requested the Council of Ministers to allot the sum of £Syr.10 million as a first instalment towards implementing the scheme which was being studied by Sir Alexander Gibband, Partners, for supplying Aleppo with water from the Euphrates.

The Press Attaché was approached during the week by the Syrian Director of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones with a view to assisting in the provision of radio programmes for the low-powered broadcasting station which will be opened in Damascus early next year. The Director offered to give an hour's broadcasting time each day to the Press Attaché, and suggested that during this period a news bulletin in English should be broadcast.

His Majesty's Consul at Aleppo reports that the Communists continue to hold meetings at which anti-Government and anti-British speeches are made, though it appears that they are still being particularly careful to give the Central Government no opportunity of taking counter-measures against them; for this reason, in connexion with the recent strike of mill workers in Aleppo, the Communists did their best to ensure that there were no incidents.

Lebanon

On 14th December the formation of the new Lebanese Government was announced as follows:—

Riad es Solh (Sunni), Prime Minister,
Sabri Hamadi (Shia), Vice-Premier and
Minister of Interior.

Abdullah Yafi (Sunni), Minister of Justice.

Henri Pharaon (Greek Catholic), Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Emigrants.

Gabriel Murr (Greek Orthodox), Minister of Public Works.

Camille Chamoun (Maronite), Minister of Finance.

Emir Mejid Arslan (Druze), Minister of National Defence and Posts and Telegraphs.

Kamal Jumblat (Druze), Minister of National Economy, Social Affairs and Agriculture.

Dr. Elias Khoury (Maronite), Minister of Education and Public Assistance.

Pending the return of Camille Chamoun from London, Abdullah Yafi will act as Minister of Finance.

The Government represents the closest possible approach to a coalition, and its formation was only made possible by considerable concessions on the part of Riad es Solh and Henri Pharaon and their respective followers. The press reaction

has not been universally enthusiastic; one or two newspapers, however, described the Government as the strongest since the country achieved its independence, and it is noteworthy that it has been welcomed by the French language paper *L'Orient*, the fears of which on the score of Riad es Solh's nationalism appear to have been allayed. Provided that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are able to co-operate satisfactorily, there is no doubt that the position of the new Government will be a strong one, though it is unlikely to be conspicuous for administrative competence or honesty.

There are two new Ministries: the Ministry of Emigrants which has been warmly welcomed by the pro-French press but is viewed with some suspicion in nationalist circles, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, which, *inter alia*, will deal with labour problems and is an addition long overdue. The appointment of Henri Pharaon as Minister for Foreign Affairs is welcomed by the French, who hope that as a result outstanding questions will be more readily resolved.

E 543/171/89

No. 19

SYRIA AND LEBANON: WEEKLY POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 244

Week ending 24th December, 1946

(Received 16th January, 1947)

[EXTRACT]

General

A further article on Greater Syria by Walter Kolarz, the United Press correspondent in London (see Weekly Political Summary No. 243, Section I, paragraph 1) has been reproduced in the local press and has served to correct to some extent his previous misleading articles on this subject. Kolarz now writes: "The British attitude towards this project can best be described as 'neutral.' One should therefore expect from official British quarters neither open condemnation of this project nor expressions of approval. It is felt here that the new trends in British Imperial and foreign policy prevent Britain from encouraging a project like

that of Greater Syria, which is an exclusive Arab concern."

Economic

M. Van Zeeland, the former Belgian Prime Minister, has agreed to advise the Lebanese Government on the reorganisation of their finances. Riad Solh has, however, made it clear that he is anxious to make full use of the services of British experts as well, he said that a contract for a survey of certain economic projects with the British firm of consulting engineers, Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, would be signed within a few days, and welcomed the idea of the appointment of a British statistician in connexion with the common interests, a matter concerning which the Syrian Government have already been in

touch with His Majesty's Legation at Damascus.

Syria

The resignation of Saadullah Jabri's Government was announced on 21st December by Khaled el Azm, the Acting Prime Minister. After considerable political activity, it has been announced in the press that Jamil Mardam has been asked to form a new Government. It is probable that the Government will be a coalition representing the National Bloc, and the Opposition with one or two "neutral" members. It is learned that Saadullah Jabri, without whose parliamentary support no new Government could be expected to last, has assured Jamil Mardam that he will provide the necessary parliamentary backing.

It is reported in the press that the French have asked for the sum of £8.8 million for French property taken over by the Syrian authorities. Most Syrian newspapers consider that the Syrian Government should first secure compensation for the damage inflicted on Syrian towns by the French in 1945 before considering French claims on Syria.

Lebanon

The new Lebanese Government received a unanimous vote of confidence at the sitting of the Chamber on 21st December, although there are already indications that, as anticipated, co-operation between Riad Solh and Henri Pharaon is not proving easy. There is little doubt that the unanimous vote of confidence is a tribute to the prestige of the members of the Administration rather than an expression of satisfaction with the statement of the Government's policy which, as the Prime Minister admitted, was in most general terms, particularly as regards internal and economic affairs. The following points regarding the Government's foreign policy from the Prime Minister's speech are of interest:—

- (a) Complete independence of the Lebanon within its present borders and close collaboration with Arab States within the framework of the Charter of the League. Collaboration with the Arab League must be on condition that it does not affect

in any way the independence of the Lebanon.

- (b) Collaboration with Syria should be of such a nature as to safeguard the common interests of the two countries.
- (c) Egypt will receive from the Lebanon nothing short of full support in its struggle for complete independence.
- (d) The Lebanese will not relax their efforts as long as Palestine remains threatened and until its sovereignty and Arabism are realised.

In connexion with the newly-formed Ministry of Emigrants, the Prime Minister gave an undertaking that the question would not be treated in a manner to increase the voting power of any religious community.

The Government have decided that Camille Chamoun, the Lebanese Minister in London and newly-appointed Minister of Finance, will stay in the United Kingdom until after the Palestine Conference in January. Charles Hellou, the editor of *Le Jour*, has been appointed to be the first Lebanese Minister to the Vatican. He is a close friend of the President and his family.

The Secretary-General of the Lebanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs informed His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires that the French and United States Governments had agreed to the abolition of the Mixed Courts as from the end of the year. The necessary draft law will be submitted to the Lebanese Chamber on 30th December.

Two articles have appeared in the Communist newspaper *Saut-esh-Shaab*, contending that the majority of workmen to whom leaving indemnities are being paid by the British military authorities have been deprived of their rights, and that those who are receiving them have to thank Mustafa Ariss and the International Federation of Trades Unions. Measures to correct this misleading impression are being taken by His Majesty's Legation.

Nicolas Shawi, the editor of *Saut-esh-Shaab*, has been elected President of the Lebanese Communist Party in place of Farajallah Hellou, who it is reported intends in the near future to visit Paris and London.

SYRIA AND LEBANON: WEEKLY POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 245

Week ending 31st December, 1946

(Received 23rd January, 1947)

[Extract]

General

Nil.

Economic

There has been much speculation regarding the new Lebanese Government's economic policy and it is believed that an attempt will be made to lower duties on essential commodities and increase them on luxury goods. On 31st December the Lebanese Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and acting Minister of Finance, and the Minister for National Economy visited Damascus to establish contact with the new Syrian Government and to hold preliminary discussion regarding joint economic measures. In this connexion the campaign of *L'Orient* and other papers of the same tendency for the dissolution of the Syrian-Lebanese economic union has been intensified. *L'Orient* contends that in order to strengthen the political solidarity existing between Damascus and Beirut the economic union must be broken, and that the ground must be prepared before the end of 1947, when the Common Interest Convention expires.

A contract between the Lebanese Government and the British firm of consulting engineers, Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, was signed on 27th December (see Weekly Political Summary No. 244, Economic). This development has been strongly criticised by the Communist paper *Saut-esh-Shaab* and also by the Phalangist organ *Amal*.

At the sitting of the Syrian Chamber of Deputies on 31st December the Syrian Prime Minister announced that the restrictions on transport of cereals throughout Syria would be lifted from 1st January, 1947.

Syria

On the 23rd December Jamil Bey Mardam announced the composition of his Government as follows:—

Jamil Mardam: Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior and Public Health.

Said Ghazzi: Minister of Finance.

Maim Antaki: Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Ahmed Sharabati: Minister of National Defence.

Emir Adel Arslan: Minister of Education.

Dr. Hikmat el Hakim: Minister of National Economy.

Dr. Adnan Atassi: Minister of Justice and Public Works.

The Cabinet, with the exception of the Prime Minister, contains no outstanding personalities but the Minister of Justice and Public Works is a member of Rushdi Kekhja's Parliamentary Opposition Party. It may therefore be termed a Coalition Government though in view of the absence of political personalities it will have to rely for its parliamentary majority on the support of Saadullah Bey Jabri and his followers. Jamil Bey, in a speech in Parliament on 30th December, outlined the policy of his Government in general terms. The most important points were that the Government believed that the interests of Syria required the maintenance of the republican régime; that the Government would aim at a balance of imports and exports through a policy of increasing agricultural and industrial production and that the Government was resolved to respect the freedom of the press. After a debate on the Prime Minister's statement during which the general attitude was one of "wait and see," Jamil Bey received a vote of confidence by fifty-eight votes to thirty-three; those voting against included three of the recent Cabinet. Khaled el Azm, Sabri el Assali and Michel Lian and a certain number of Aleppo Deputies, a few Kurds, some of the Atrash family and a few Deputies from the Alnoute district.

At the final sitting of the 7th Ordinary Session of the Chamber a presidential decree was read convening Parliament to an extraordinary session commencing on 11th January during which the 1947 budget will be debated. In view of the terms of the decree, no other matter can be considered before the next ordinary sitting on 16th March.

Pamphlets have been distributed in Damascus signed by a Dr. Mohammad Sobhi Ghanimeh, calling himself president of the

Transjordan Arab Party, attacking the Anglo-Transjordan Treaty, the new Transjordan constitution and King Abdullah's forthcoming visit to Angora.

According to the press the Aleppo Federation of Trade Unions met recently and took the following decisions:—

- (1) To enforce the application of the Labour Code and call a strike if employers do not co-operate.
- (2) To reduce as much as possible the widespread unemployment.
- (3) To use all means to combat the high cost of living.
- (4) To improve the quality of flour.
- (5) To insist that Government contractors should employ local labour.
- (6) To protect local industries and obtain a good supply of raw materials.
- (7) To stop the sale of foreign imitations of Syrian products.
- (8) To make social welfare services available to all.

Lebanon

The Lebanese President attended the sitting of the Chamber on 30th December when the Prime Minister stated that the evacuation of foreign troops had been completed, that the Mixed Courts would be abolished and that the Government has decided to reduce the price of flour and wheat by approximately 30 per cent. In his statement the Prime Minister paid a tribute to the work of the President of the Republic in achieving the country's independence and also to the foreign Powers concerned for their scrupulous observance of the terms of the agreement. All members

of the French Liquidation Staff left the Lebanon on 31st December, 1946.

The draft law for the abolition of the Mixed Courts was presented by the Minister of Justice, who paid a warm tribute to the French judges for their work in the Lebanese Courts. The Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed the thanks of his Government to the U.S.S.R. which had abandoned privileges enjoyed under the Ottoman Empire. He also thanked the American Government, His Majesty's Government and the French Government who had welcomed the abolition of the Mixed Courts. The draft law was passed unanimously.

Count Ostorog has been awarded the decoration of Grand Officer of the Order of the Cedar and is leaving shortly to take up his appointment as French Minister in Dublin. The new Belgian Minister, M. d'Aspremont Lynden, presented his letters of credence to the Lebanese President on 30th December. Joseph Harfouche, the newly-appointed Lebanese Chargé d'Affaires in Brussels, is being recalled to be Director of Emigrants; this department will, for the time being, continue to form part of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Note.—In view of the separation of His Majesty's Legations at Beirut and Damascus, the Beirut Combined Weekly Political Summary will close with this number.

Separate summaries will in future be prepared at Beirut and Damascus and will for the present be circulated to all who have hitherto received the combined Summary.

E 1158/171/89

No. 21

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 1

Week ending 7th January, 1947

Political

The Syrian Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet and a representative of the Syrian President attended the official Lebanese celebrations of the evacuation of foreign troops in Beirut on 1st to 3rd January.

During the past week there have been some interesting visitors to Damascus. Sheikh Yusuf Yasin arrived from Amman with the expressed intention of negotiating for the reopening of the Hedjaz railway and of visiting his family in Latakia. The

Iraqi Minister for Social Affairs and the Inspector-General of the Iraqi Ministry for Foreign Affairs passed through Damascus on their way to Bagdad and held discussions with Jamil Bey Mardam and the Syrian President. At the same time Mohammed el Ajloni, the Transjordanian Minister to the Lebanon, visited Damascus as the guest of the Syrian Government and is reported in the press to have discussed the possibility of opening diplomatic relations with Syria. Towards the end of the week Irsan Bey Sherif, the Syrian Minister

in Angora, returned to Damascus ostensibly to be briefed for his forthcoming visit to Greece as head of the Syrian Delegation of the United Nations Security Council's Commission of Enquiry. These comings and goings viewed against the background of King Abdullah's visit to Turkey have given ample scope for speculation in political circles. The most probable explanation is that since Jamil Mardam is known to be more inclined to listen to argument than his predecessor, representatives of neighbour States are investigating the possibility of improving relations with Syria which had generally deteriorated during Saadullah Jabri's tenure of office.

During the week the B.B.C. and the Egyptian press have carried what are alleged to be statements by the Council of the Arab League and by the Foreign Ministers of Arab countries concerning the forthcoming Palestine Conference and the intervention of the league in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty negotiations. Although these "decisions" appear to be entirely unknown to the Syrian President, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, they have taken no steps to disassociate Syria from the decisions alleged to have been made by the Arab League.

In the course of conversation about Greater Syria with His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires, Sheikh Yusuf Yasin remarked that if King Abdullah persisted in his scheme for a Greater Syria the Arab League might find itself obliged to expel Transjordan.

The announcement of the appointment of Mr. P. S. Scrivener as His Majesty's Minister to Syria was released for publication on 3rd January.

M. d'Aspremont Lynden, the new Belgian Minister, presented his letters of credence to the Syrian President on 6th January.

It is reported that the Arab Academy in Damascus has accepted an invitation to send a representative to the Inter-Asian Relations Conference, which is to be held in India in the spring.

A Damascus newspaper reports that eight Lebanese and Syrian personalities have been invited by the Syrian Government to visit Soviet Russia on the 14th of this month. In conversation with the British Council delegate in Damascus, the Syrian Minister of Education said that the Russian Minister had asked him to send an official deputation of teachers to visit Russia. The Minister of Education replied that if the invitation were official it should be made to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Economic

Several meetings have taken place during the week between the Syrian and Lebanese Ministers concerned to discuss a number of economic matters of common interest, including the reduction and abolition of certain taxes on imported articles and the steps to be taken by the two Governments towards lowering the present high cost of living.

E 1159/171/89

No. 22

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 2

Week ending 14th January, 1947

(Received 6th February)

[Extract]

Political

The first and second sittings of the Ninth Extraordinary Session of the Chamber of Deputies were held on 11th and 13th January to debate the Budget Committee's report on the 1947 budget. The report urged the Government to prepare a general economic programme which would guarantee the protection of wealth, the agriculture

of the country, the development of industry and commerce and would ensure full employment for the working class; other recommendations included a request that the Government should introduce compulsory military service; that they should allocate 5 million Syrian pounds for the Aleppo water project and should examine the question of the smallness of the sum accruing from oil royalties. At the second sitting the budgets were passed for the

presidency, the Chamber, the Diwan of Accounts, the presidency of the Council of Ministers (from which 1 million Syrian pounds was allocated to the redemption of land in Palestine and half a million for the employment of foreign technicians and experts, though voting on this latter sum was postponed until the Government furnished the Chamber with more details concerning the experts already employed), the Fatwa and religious teaching, the Council of State and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The Prime Minister has informed His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires that Fares Bey Khouri had been asked to head the Syrian delegation to London for the Palestine Conference and that the Emir Adel Arslan and Najib Armanazi would be members of the delegation.

King Abdullah's visit to Turkey continues to cause considerable comment and, in particular, the fact that he landed at Alexandretta has given rise to resentment that the head of an Arab State should thus admit Turkish sovereignty over the Hatay.

A committee has been formed under the director of the Department of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones for managing the affairs of the Damascus Broadcasting Station which is to be opened before the end of January. The committee includes two members of the Damascus Arab Academy and Akram Zuaiter, an ex-Palestinian schoolmaster who has recently been removed from the Palestine black list.

The Mission Laique School in Aleppo reopened on 2nd January and already about eighty pupils are attending the classes. The majority of the latter are Jewish children as the Alliance Israélite school here has so far not been authorised to reopen and many Jewish parents have

been glad to avail themselves of the educational facilities offered by the Mission Laique which already possesses several newly-arrived teachers from France.

His Majesty's Consul in Aleppo reports that a meeting of Kurdish leaders was recently held in Damascus when the attitude to be adopted by the Syrian Kurds towards the "independent Kurdistan" movement sponsored by Russia was seriously considered. A leading Kurd from Ain-el-Arab urged patience and advised that the suggestion of Russian agitators that Kurds should attack Turkey ought not to be followed since the Kurds might be let down by the Russians in the same way as the Azerbaijanis.

Economic

Figures have been issued giving the total amount of cereals (wheat and barley) collected by M.J.R.A. up to 19th December, 1946, in Syria, as follows:—

	Tons
Aleppo Mohafazat	80,662
Euphrates Mohafazat	5,102
Jezireh Mohafazat	106,600
Alaouite Mohafazat	1,467
Total for Northern Syria	193,831
Total for Southern Syria	75,048
Grand total	268,879

Discussions between the Syrian and Lebanese Prime Ministers and members of their Cabinets on economic matters have continued during the week.

An American agricultural expert has taken up his appointment as technical expert to the Syrian Government and according to a press statement made by the Prime Minister, five more agricultural experts will be arriving shortly.

E 1350/171/89

No. 23

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 3

Week ending 21st January

[Extract]

Political

The 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Sittings of the 9th Extraordinary Session of the Syrian Parliament were held on 15th, 16th, 18th and 21st January, when the remaining items in the budget were debated and unanimously approved. *Inter alia*, the

following sums were voted (approximate figures):—

Gendarmerie: £S.11½ million.
Public Works: £S.32½ million, including the sum of £S.5 million for the Aleppo water project.
Ministry of Education: £S.13 million.
Syrian University: £S.3½ million.

Ministry of Defence: Nearly £S.25 million, including a figure of £S.833,334 as a first instalment for payment to the Allied authorities for the purchase of military camps and £S.1½ million for the purchase of aircraft for the Syrian Aviation School.

Resentment at King Abdullah's actions in travelling to and from Turkey via Alexandretta is still being freely expressed, though press comment died down for a few days as a result of efforts made by the Prime Minister. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, in conversation with the Oriental Secretary, complained in particular about King Abdullah's farewell ceremony at Iskenderun, when the King is reported to have expressed his regret at leaving "Turkish territory" and to have saluted the Turkish flag. Reaction in the Turkish press to unfavourable Syrian comment on King Abdullah's visit has taken the form of accusing the Syrians of closing the Northern Mohafazats in order to hide from foreign eyes the atrocities being committed against Turks in the Latakia district; in consequence, another crop of anti-Turkish editorials is beginning (see Section 3 below).⁽¹⁾

The Saudi Arabian Legation at Damascus has issued an emphatic denial

⁽¹⁾ Not printed.

of the news published in several Syrian and Lebanese papers that the Emir Feisal is a candidate for the throne of Syria. The communiqué states that Ibn Saud supports the *status quo* in Syria and the Lebanon and is opposed to any policy of change.

His Majesty's Consul at Aleppo reports that the first visit of the mobile cinema unit to Aleppo was a considerable success. Many Syrian officials and heads of educational establishments who saw the films expressed their desire to borrow the mobile unit and to give film shows at schools and clubs, and, at the request of the kaïmakam, a show was given at Idlib.

Economic

An official communiqué states that currency in circulation in Syria on 15th December, 1946, amounted to £S.199,500,000.

The Council of Ministers have approved Syria's inclusion as a member of the International Bank; the Chamber of Deputies will be asked to approve in the next Session.

Sheikh Yusuf Yasin has stated to the press that King Ibn Saud intends to repair that part of the Hejaz Railway line which lies within Saudi Arabian territory, but that it will not be converted to a wider gauge.

E 1335/171/89

No. 24

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 4

Week ending 28th January

[Extract]

Political

During a visit to Mohsen Barazi, the head of the President's office, on 28th January, His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires raised the question of a somewhat violent statement in support of Egypt which, according to the Arab News Agency, the Syrian President had made to the Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires. Mohsen Bey explained that some days ago the President, having heard that the Egyptian Minister was shortly to leave Beirut for London, had asked the Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires in Damascus to convey his good wishes, and had added in general terms an expression of his hope for the success of the treaty negotiations and of his support for

Egypt's case—what Mohsen Bey described as "diplomatic courtesies." He said that the President had been "a little surprised" at the publication of these informal remarks and at their complete distortion. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires replied that "a little surprise" seemed to him a moderate reaction, and he thought that the least the President could do would be to issue a *démenti*. Mohsen Bey promised to convey his views to the President.

During this same interview Mohsen Bey told His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires that the President intended to canvass other heads of Arab States with a view to making a joint approach to the King on the subject of Palestine. The Arabs saw in the Palestine Conference their last hope of a

just solution, and it was the President's intention to suggest to other heads of State that His Majesty should be requested to instruct his Government to adopt a benevolent attitude towards the Arab case.

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires discussed with the Syrian Prime Minister on 25th January the recent Turco-Syrian press campaign following on King Abdullah's visit to Turkey. Jamil Bey said that public opinion was naturally upset over this visit, particularly over King Abdullah's tactlessness in passing through Alexandretta. He had done his best to calm things down, and had instructed the Syrian Minister in Angora to try to persuade the Turkish Government to take similar action. He intended shortly to tour the Lattakia province to satisfy himself of the baselessness of Turkish accusations of the maltreatment of Turks. The Prime Minister added that the Syrian Government were being pressed to take up the Alexandretta question with U.N.O., but he himself did not wish to bring the matter to a head and would prefer to work for a *détente*.

During a meeting of the Syrian Parliament on 20th January the Chamber expressed its sympathy with Egypt whose cause "should be regarded as the cause of the Arabs."

During the sitting of 22nd January the Syrian Parliament passed a bill for the allocation in the budget of £S.1 million for the redemption of land in Palestine. This sum was to be paid to the Secretariat-General of the Arab League. In a speech the Prime Minister said that both the Syrian people and their Government were always prepared to make the greatest sacrifices for the deliverance of Palestine and that, should the negotiations in London fail, the Arab States would then submit the case of Palestine to the U.N.O. Jamil Bey emphasised that the Arab delegates would not accept any partition of

Palestine or the creation of a Jewish State, and that they were strongly opposed to the illegal immigration of Jews into Palestine. The Prime Minister ended by saying that the Arab League had done its duty by Palestine in spite of many difficulties but, should it be necessary, the Arabs would defend Palestine with their blood.

The staffs of the Damascus cinemas went on strike from 20th-23rd January in protest against heavy taxation. The strike came to an end when the Minister of Finance promised that their demands would be studied by a special committee.

Economic

During the debate on the budget on 20th January demands were made for the abolition of the sugar monopoly. In reply, the Minister of Finance stated that it was impossible at the moment to allow free trade in sugar for various reasons, the most important of which was the difficulty of transport. He added that, although the amount of sugar consumed by Syria and the Lebanon before the war was 35,000 tons yearly, the quota at present granted to them was only 24,000 tons, of which 18,000 tons were allotted to Syria and 6,000 to the Lebanon.

Before the 1947 budget was finally approved on the 21st January a Statement of Revenues had been agreed to which included £S.7 million on carbo-hydrates, £S.9 million on the sugar monopoly, £S.30 million on revenues from the customs duties, £S.1 million from the Government's share of the Syrian Bank's profits, £S.400,000 from the Exchange Office, £S.10,000 from the Syrian Aviation service, and £S.8,000 from the Syrian sea-ports. Two additional budgets, those for the Posts and Telegraphs Department and the Agricultural Bank, respectively for 2,200,000 and £S.400,000 were approved on 22nd January.

possibility of Syria and the Lebanon offering themselves as intermediaries in order to assist the resumption of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty negotiations. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires asked to be informed before any decision was taken.

The idea that the heads of Arab States should make a joint approach to The King on the subject of Palestine (see Weekly Political Summary No. 4, section 1, paragraph 2) has been dropped in view of the fact that The King is absent from the United Kingdom.

The Syrian Prime Minister on 1st February issued a statement to the press pointing out that the President's communication to the Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires (see Weekly Political Summary No. 4, Political) had been made before the breakdown of treaty negotiations and that the news agency message contained certain expressions which were not in the original statement.

A Reuter message from Damascus during the week alleged that the Syrian Prime Minister had informed His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires that the Syrian Government proposed to raise the question of the return of the Hatay to Syria with the United Nations. Jamil Bey Mardam issued a *démenti* at a press conference on his return from the north.

Jamil Bey Mardam, in his capacity as Minister of the Interior, visited Homs, Hama and Aleppo during the week accompanied by four of his directors-general. He confined his activities largely to local matters, and during his stay in Aleppo announced that the first prize in a competition for the lay-out of the new Municipal Gardens had been awarded to a French municipal engineer. It is learnt that he held discussions with Rushdi Kekhia and

other members of his party concerning, *inter alia*, the reform of the electoral law and appears to have received a promise of their support at least in this matter.

The oriental secretary and the military attaché, after obtaining permission to visit Lattakia from the Ministry of the Interior, spent two days in the Mohafazat and received a friendly welcome from the Mohafez and other Syrian officials, though the head of the Security Police in Lattakia informed the oriental secretary that he had been asked to report to Damascus full details of the visit. Three and a half million Syrian pounds are to be spent during 1947 in the Lattakia Mohafazat on public buildings, mainly schools, hospitals and libraries, and it appears that the Syrian Government are making a genuine effort to improve the somewhat backward condition of the area. It was noticeable, however, that all the senior Government officials were Sunni Moslems, and that the Alaouites were largely shut out from posts of responsibility. The peasants appeared contented and well clothed and the crop prospects are good.

A delegation of four members of the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union is shortly to pay a visit to Russia as the guests of the Soviet Government.

The Damascus Broadcasting Station was opened on 3rd February.

Economic

Nil.

E 1511/171/89

No. 25

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 5

Week ending 4th February, 1947

(Received 19th February, 1947)

[Extract]

Political

In conversation with His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires, the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he was considering the

E 1701/171/89

No. 26

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 6

Week ending 11th February, 1947

(Received 27th February)

[Extract]

Political

On 6th February the Minister for Foreign Affairs handed an aide-mémoire to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires expressing the Syrian Government's regret at the interruption of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty negotiations and offering the good offices of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments to facilitate the resumption of negotiations. The Syrian President appears to be genuinely worried about the effect of the breakdown in the Anglo-

Egyptian negotiations on the Arab States in general and on their relations with Great Britain in particular. He will certainly use his influence to ensure a resumption of negotiations. The Syrian Government's offer has been accepted by His Majesty's Government.

On 10th February the Oriental Secretary presented to the Minister for Foreign Affairs a summary of the new British proposals for Palestine. Naim Bey Antaki made no comment except that he understood the proposals were considered unacceptable by the Arab delegates.

Jamil Mardam Bey, Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, visited Jebel Druze during the week and met Soltan Pasha el Atrash and the Emir Hassan. They made their usual complaints about lack of recognition by the Syrian Government and demanded a seat in the Cabinet. Jamil Bey was non-committal.

Fifteen Jews were arrested by the Syrian Frontier Police on Friday, 7th February, and brought to Damascus. At the request of the Assistant District Commissioner, Safad, the enquiry into their actions was postponed to allow the Palestine authorities to make full enquiries into the circumstances of the arrest.

Khalad Bagdash is reported to have resigned from the leadership of the Syrian Communist Party. He has applied for a visa to attend a meeting of representatives of Communist parties in England at the end of February. He had an interview with His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires to urge that his visa should be granted and in the course of conversation went out of his way to point out that the Syrian Communist Party were patriotic Syrians and were not under foreign influence; they opposed the policy of His Majesty's Government only where, in their opinion, it was contrary to the interests of Syria; in a number of matters they were in full agreement with the policy of His Majesty's Government and would support it. This is the first occasion on which Khaled Bagdash has sought an interview with any member of the legation staff; it may be that he is uneasy as a result of the recent raid on the Communist printing press in Bagdad, when papers incriminating him were seized.

Moustafa Mu'min, representative of the university graduates of the Egyptian Moslem Brethren, visited Damascus and is reported in the press to be visiting other parts of Syria with a view to explaining the Egyptian views on the future of the Sudan before proceeding to the Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq and later representing the Moslem Brethren at the Inter-Asiatic Relations Conference in India. *El Manar*, the organ of the

Damascus Ikhwan al Muslimeen, carried a particularly violent article supporting Egypt's claims on the Sudan a few days after Moustafa Mu'min's arrival.

Economic

The Ministry of Public Works has informed this legation that they are preparing a contract for Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners based on this firm's proposals for the Aleppo Water Supply project. As the draft contract is very similar to the firm's proposals, His Majesty's Legation have, at the request of the Ministry of Public Works, informed Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners that they may at once prepare to start their detailed investigations based on the proposals already submitted to the Syrian Government. Though the Government has not yet made a decision on the hydro-electric proposals, this virtual agreement is an encouraging step in the direction of wider participation by British firms in Syrian economic development.

The Ministry of Finance has asked the Commercial Secretariat to find out whether Arabic typewriters from Germany can be exchanged for Syrian agricultural or other produce, thus confirming previous press reports that the Syrian Government were considering limited barter agreements with other countries.

The Minister of Finance has intimated that, though he wishes to support a policy of co-operation with the British Middle East authorities in regard to imports of commodities in short supply, the effect of commercial imports of sugar by neighbouring countries may oblige the Ministry to take action contrary to such co-operation in respect of this commodity. The Minister stated that offers were being made through commercial channels for substantial quantities of white sugar at a price approaching that for supplies purchased under the official allocation system, and that concern is felt at the probability of contraband imports into Syria causing a serious loss of fiscal revenue derived by the Government from the tax on the allocation of imports distributed through official agencies.

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 7

Week ending 18th February, 1947

(Received 11th March)

[Extract]

Political

On 12th February His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires handed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs a reply from His Majesty's Government accepting the offer of the good offices of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments to assist the resumption of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty negotiations and expressing willingness to consider any proposals put forward by the Egyptian Government or the Governments of the Levant States in this connexion. The Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that the Syrian Government had as yet received no reply from the Government of Egypt.

On 17th February Sheikh Yusuf Yasin arrived from Egypt accompanied by Mohamed Bey Yusef, a special representative of the King of Egypt. Both lunched the same day with the Syrian President and Prime Minister, when Sheikh Yusuf communicated to the President a message from Ibn Saud on the same lines as that which he had already delivered to King Farouk. In conversation with His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires he said that Nokrashi Pasha had told him that he hoped the matter would not be discussed at the forthcoming conference of the Arab League as the Iraqis would probably be difficult; Sheikh Yusuf had replied that unless negotiations had been resumed in the meantime the matter would have to be discussed since it so closely affected all Arab countries.

Apart from press comment (see Section III below)(¹) the announcement of His Majesty's Government's intention to refer the Palestine question to the United Nations Organisation has produced little reaction. The Syrians had never been hopeful of the outcome of the conference and it was clear that a deadlock had been reached some days before the formal

announcement by Mr. Bevin on 14th February.

The Syrian Ikhwan al Muslimeen telegraphed to this legation protesting that the failure of the London Conference proved that the British viewed the Palestine problem through Zionist spectacles and claiming that the Arabs were prepared to fight for years "bloodily and cruelly until our country is restored to us."

Dr. Subhi Abu Ghanimeh, head of the Transjordan Liberal Youth Association, has been conducting a vigorous campaign in Damascus against the present régime in Transjordan. The association has issued a manifesto which was published in a number of the Damascus newspapers and an open letter to Glubb Pasha. No action has been taken by the Government to discourage these activities.

Economic

This legation has been informed by the Director-General of the Syrian Ministry for Public Works that he has received a letter from Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners requesting either a modification of their technical obligations in regard to the Aleppo Water Supply Project or an increase in their fees. The Director-General stated that he had considered the contract settled, and had replied to the firm by telegram asking them to reconsider their request.

Three members of the Anglo-American group of experts of the A.I.O.C. had an interview on 16th February with the Minister for Public Works and were granted full facilities for the survey party.

A Government communiqué of 6th February, 1947, announced a reduction in the customs tariff, on industrial and agricultural machinery, from 25 per cent. to 1 per cent. *ad valorem* with effect from 23rd January, 1947.

(¹) Not printed.

SYRIA: WEEKLY SUMMARY No. 8

Week ending 25th February, 1947

(Received 22nd March)

[Extract]

Political

The President, accompanied by the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs, visited Beirut from 22nd-24th February as the guest of the Lebanese President. The Lebanese Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs accompanied the President on his return to Damascus, where a pompous reception had been staged. Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Deputies and notables were kept waiting in a tent for an hour, after which they were permitted to file past the President, shake his hand and congratulate him on having safely accomplished the arduous journey from Beirut. The town was illuminated in the evening and torchlight processions were held. There was some criticism by the public of the waste of money on these ceremonies.

Mr. Bevin's statement on Palestine in the House of Commons on 25th February has, with few exceptions, been favourably received throughout the country. The President is reported to have said that the statement has shown clearly that His Majesty's Government are not unmindful of Arab interests and that they would not be to blame if the Arabs failed to secure a favourable decision from the United Nations.

On 25th February the Minister for Foreign Affairs informed His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires that the Syrian and Lebanese Governments had received a reply from the Egyptian Government to their offer of their good offices in connexion with the rupture of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty negotiations. Naim Bey Antaki said that the Egyptian answer contained no proposal as a basis for the resumption of negotiations, and asked whether His Majesty's Government had themselves any further proposals to make. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires replied that, while he would report what the Minister for Foreign Affairs had said, the Egyptian Government had already turned down every suggestion of His Majesty's Government and that it

seemed unlikely that His Majesty's Government could make further offers.

Saadullah Bey Jabri returned to Damascus on 18th February and has since remained in his room at the Orient Palace Hotel. He has been visited by the President of the Republic, by Riad Bey es Solh and by one or two of his most intimate friends and relations. There is little doubt that he is still an extremely sick man and it will be some considerable time at least before he will be able to re-enter politics.

Jamil Bey Mardam's Cabinet is beginning to find itself in difficulties. The Minister for Foreign Affairs tendered his resignation last week but has been asked by the President to withdraw it, for the time being at least. There are rumours also of the impending resignation of Hikmat el Hakim and Adnan el Atassi. It is probable that Adnan Atassi, the representative in the Cabinet of Rushdi Kekhia's Opposition group, is at the bottom of the trouble. It has been suggested that Jamil Bey Mardam may try to buy Rushdi Kekhia's support by introducing legislation for a new Electoral Law and by removing the present chief of police at Aleppo, who is considered by Rushdi Kekhia's party as being active in furthering the political interests of the National bloc.

With the present eclipse of Saadullah Bey Jabri the term "National bloc" has lost much of its meaning. The bloc was formed in 1934 by an amalgamation of various groups such as the Istiqlal, the Arab Party and the League of National Action in order to present a united front against the French and to work for the evacuation of Syria. Since evacuation has been completed the aim of the National bloc has been achieved and the bloc has tended to split into groups following various individuals rather than any particular political programme, Saadullah Bey retaining the largest individual following. It is now true to say, therefore, that the National bloc, in its old meaning, has ceased to exist. The new party which Jamil Mardam is hoping to form for election purposes will be to some extent based

upon members of the old National bloc and, therefore, the existence or otherwise of a group led by Saadullah Bey Jabri will profoundly affect the groupings in the forthcoming elections. If Saadullah Bey does not recover in time the President of the Republic will be faced with the choice of supporting Jamil Bey and his new party or relying on an amalgamation of the various elements opposed to Jamil Mardam.

There has been a number of rumours concerning the return of Fawzi Qawaqji to the Levant States. In conversation with the oriental secretary the Minister of Defence stated that in no circumstances would he have in the Syrian army a man who had taken an active part in the Rashid Ali rebellion. It is not impossible, however, that should he return to Syria Fawzi Qawaqji might be employed as a civilian adviser to the Syrian army.

It is known that the agreement to the appointment of Fario Zein Eddin (Syrian Personality No. 189) as Syrian Minister to Moscow has been refused on the grounds that he collaborated with the Germans during the Vichy régime in the Levant States.

In the course of conversation with the oriental secretary Muhsen Bey Barazi, head of the President's Cabinet, remarked that the President was very displeased with the Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires and the members of his staff for their activities among the Ikhwan al Muslimeen, particularly in connexion with the visit of Moustafa Mu'min (representative of the university graduates of the Egyptian Moslem Brethren) when one of the sheikhs of the Syrian Ikhwan made a speech in the Omayyad Mosque violently attacking British policy over the Sudan. The sheikh in question has been informed that he will be banished if any repetition occurs and Sheikh Moustafa Sebai, President of the

Syrian Ikhwan al Muslimeen, has been told by the President that the Ikhwan al Muslimeen must not interfere in matters concerning international politics. The oriental secretary took the opportunity of mentioning the forthcoming visit of the Ashigga delegation, who are due to reach Damascus in a few days to present their views on the future of the Sudan. Muhsen Barazi gave an assurance that they would not be allowed to speak in the mosques nor to cause demonstrations but said that it would be hard to prevent the press from becoming violent in view of the freedom of expression which it was the policy of the present Government to allow. The oriental secretary pointed out that it would be most unfortunate if the Ashigga representatives were able to mislead the public by a press campaign into the view that they represent anything other than a very small proportion of Sudan opinion.

Economic

An increasing general slackness in trade is reported from commercial sources. This is probably due to a buyers' "wait-and-see" policy in the expectation of a continued fall in prices following the application of various Government decisions designed to achieve reductions in prices of various commodities.

It is learnt that discussions are taking place between Pan-American Airways and the newly formed Syrian Aviation Company concerning the provision for the latter of technical assistance. It is understood that considerable difficulties are being met with in setting up a working organisation.

The Syrian Mira have concluded an agreement with the Italian Government for the sale of 5,000 tons of wheat at United States dollars 300 per ton.

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 1 FOR MARCH, 1947

I.—Political

There have been rumours during the month of an impending reshuffle in the Cabinet; and the Minister for Foreign Affairs is known to have handed in his resignation, though it has not yet been accepted. It is possible that the President of the Republic wishes to strengthen the

present Government by the inclusion of a friend of Saadullah Jabri in order to ensure the support of Saadullah Jabri's following in the Chamber of Deputies during the final session of the present Parliament which opened on 31st March. Saadullah Jabri's health is making some progress, though it is unlikely that he will

be able to take an active part in the forthcoming elections (see Political Summary No. 7, Section 1, paragraph 4).

2. There has been considerable activity in connexion with the formation of a "new" political party which, for election purposes, will replace the old National *bloc*. Nabih el Azmeh is the organising secretary of the party which has the support of the President of the Republic, Jamil Mardam, Lutfi Maffar, Khaled el Azm, Sabri el Assali, Edmond Homsy and a number of other members of the old *bloc*; Nabih el Azmeh's attempts to obtain supporters from Rashdi Kekhia's group have not yet proved successful. Two unsuccessful attempts have been made to draw up an agreed political programme: the second draft contained, *inter alia*, proposals for the splitting up of big landed estates, heavy taxation on large incomes and the withdrawal of representation in the Chamber of Deputies on a confessional basis.

3. In external affairs the Arab League meeting and, in particular, the resolution passed by the League Council giving full support to Egypt has been the main item of political interest. Despite assurances given by the Syrian Prime Minister to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires that he would use every endeavour to obtain, at worst, a reasonably worded statement concerning the support of the Arab States for Egypt, the Syrian delegates, in company with those of the other Arab States, crumpled up when faced by Azzam Pasha and the Egyptian delegates, and approved the official communiqué without reservation.

4. The visit of the Ashigga delegation to Damascus failed to produce any marked effect and was forgotten by the press and the public within 48 hours. The President of the Republic steadfastly refused to receive them even under considerable pressure from the Egyptian Minister and various extremist Syrian organisations.

5. President Truman's statement on American financial aid to Greece and Turkey was received with some suspicion, probably on account of the fear that American support would result in strengthening Turkey and her attitude towards Syrian claims on the Hatay. The President of the Republic, through his "chef du Cabinet," cross-questioned the oriental secretary closely on the reasons for the offer of American assistance, and asked whether or not it indicated that Great Britain intended to withdraw from the Middle East, leaving the area to American

influence; he did not appear to relish such a prospect.

6. A census of the population of Syria was taken on the 26th March, the first since 1922. The results are not yet known; it is improbable that electoral lists based on the new census can be prepared in time for the elections.

7. There has been a fresh crop of rumours about a Monarchist *coup* in Syria in the near future. It does not appear, however, that any of these intrigues have yet reached an explosive stage, though there is always a possibility of a well planned military *coup* taking place without warning.

8. Reports from the Assyrian community on the Khabour indicate that the reabsorption of the Assyrians, who served during the war in the Iraqi Levies, is proving difficult owing to the shortage of capital available for the purchase of the agricultural machinery necessary to extend the area of cultivation. As a result, the neighbouring tribes are said to be encroaching on land allotted to the Assyrians but which the latter are not in a position to cultivate.

9. Fawzi Qawuqji arrived in Damascus on 23rd March and is staying at the Orient Palace Hotel. A small student demonstration was organised in his honour and he has been entertained by the Arab Club. He registered himself during the census as a Syrian national.

10. The Director-General of Gendarmerie informed the oriental secretary that at least eight Armenians who emigrated to Soviet Armenia last year have escaped and found their way back to Syria via Persia and Iraq. They are lying low, since before leaving they were deprived of Syrian nationality, and are afraid of being handed over by the Syrian Government to the Russian authorities. Colonel Hrnt has himself interviewed one of them, who stated that conditions in Soviet Armenia were extremely bad with inadequate housing, little food, low pay and much unemployment. The Syrian authorities are somewhat fearful of the Russians planting agents in Syria through the medium of returned emigrants. An official of the Syrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs informed a member of the staff of this legation that the Syrian Security Police intend to investigate closely each individual case which comes to their notice; once they are satisfied that the person has genuinely escaped

from Russia they will allow him to remain in Syria as a political refugee.

11. With reference to Political Summary No. 5, Section 1, paragraph 7, the delegation of members of the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union returned from their visit to Russia on the 22nd March. In conversation with a member of the legation staff they gave the impression of having been much impressed with the way the country is run. They said that although the people do not live in luxury, they live well and seem to be happy and contented; the Soviet Government had extended to them every hospitality; they were convinced that adverse reports about Russia were false propaganda.

12. Haidar Mardam Bey (Syrian Personality No. 95) has been appointed Minister to Jedda: he will be proceeding early in April. Mazhar Bakri (Syrian Personality No. 33), Minister to Brazil, left Damascus for Rio de Janeiro at the end of the month.

II.—Economic

1. On 30th March agreements were signed between the Ministry of Public Works and Communications and Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners for the following surveys and investigations to be carried out on behalf of the Syrian Government:—

- (a) *Aleppo Water Supply Project*.—The main purpose of this project is to supply drinking and domestic water, but the possibility of irrigation in the surroundings of Aleppo will also be investigated.
- (b) *Euphrates Valley Irrigation and Hydro-Electric Development Survey*.—The Ministry have stated that the survey should primarily consider agricultural development in the Euphrates valley, and secondarily, possible uses of hydro-electric power.
- (c) *Syrian Coastal Port*.—Detailed investigations are to be carried out to examine the suitability of Lattakia for development as a modern harbour, and studies near Tartus to decide whether more detailed investigations are justified in this area.

2. The Syrian Government have not yet given permission to the Saudi Arabian Oil Company to construct a pipe-line through Syria to the Mediterranean coast. The Syrians are trying to secure a terminal in

Syria, or failing this, a share in the revenue from the terminal installation.

3. The Syrian MIRA have agreed to sell to Rumania 10,000 tons of wheat at £54 (sterling) per ton, and 17,000 tons of black barley at £32 per ton, payable in sterling; and to Italy, 7,500 tons of wheat at \$200 per ton, payable in dollars. A credit has been granted for the latter and delivery will start shortly.

III.—Press

1. The visit of a Sudanese delegation, the promulgation of the "Truman doctrine," the meeting of the Arab League, and various domestic issues have successively intensified editorial comment in the Damascus press during the month of March. Currents of discussion on Palestine and Transjordan have continued to be voluminous but—since little has happened to bring them to a head—familiar.

2. Press comment on the visit of a delegation of the Sudanese Ashiqqa party was largely adulatory, but not completely so. With the conventional sentimentality and neglect of fact, many editors gave uncritical support to the cause of the Ashiqqa party. Commendatory accounts of their speeches and of the entertainments offered them by Syrian clubs and societies obscured to some extent the fact that the delegation was given little official encouragement in Damascus, where even newspaper comment was not all of one piece. Two daily newspapers traced part of the Ashiqqa's printed propaganda to a Communist source. One in headlines proclaimed that the "Black Sudanese" [*sic*] wanted independence. Such unorthodoxy had been preceded during February by the publication in some papers of impartial articles from *The Times* and *The Listener*. When the Government suppressed a demonstration on behalf of the visitors the most poignant disappointment was expressed by *Manar*, the organ of El Ikhwan el Muslimin.

3. President Truman's proposal of help to Greece and Turkey at once became the major topic of the month and drew editorial comment for more than a week. Interpreting the proposals from an exclusively local angle most editors tended to skirt around the benevolence of its essential purpose, rejecting even its possible utility as a bulwark against communism. One went so far as to say: "Arabs will not

believe in the Soviet danger just because Americans point it out." As the declaration coincided with the search of the Arab Office in Washington, and was made only a few days after Mr. Bevin's blunt remarks about American effects upon the Palestine problems, a crop of bitter allegations about America being committed to push Zionist interests in the Near East was the first reaction. More relevant comment was soon forthcoming. "The out-of-date British attempt to check communism has failed," said *Alef Ba*, "and has now to be revived by an injection of the dollar serum." Throughout the general arguments about what they called a "premeditated policy . . . to support everything which is antagonistic to Arab interests" leading newspapers did not specifically name the fear that a strengthened Turkey would be less conciliatory over the Alexandria question; but the general inference was that, though unmentioned, such was the mainspring of the reactions of the local press.

4. In mid-March the Arab League met in Cairo. Many newspapers had for some time been advocating organic improvements such as the pooling of diplomatic representation and the amalgamation of the economic and customs organisations of member States, but their attitude towards the political skill of the League was less constructive. Opposition newspapers were undisguisedly pessimistic about its ability to solve the fundamental problem of Near Eastern politics and one said that it had been brought into being only through the play of international rivalries. It was said that Britain no longer supported the League so warmly as before, since Azzam Pasha had ceased to see the world "through English spectacles." The same

newspapers entertained greater hopes of the meeting of the Conference of Arab Nations.

5. As the time for the elections draws nearer, Opposition newspapers are demanding in crescendo a reform of the electoral system. They deprecated a possible adjournment of the opening of Parliament. Sustained attacks upon the present Foreign Secretary have furnished a minor theme throughout the month. Rumours of the resignation of the whole or part of the present Cabinet have been frequent and varied. General concern was expressed over the street fighting which marked the arrival of Fawzi Quwnqji in Tripoli, but he was almost unanimously welcomed as a hero when he later came to Damascus. Some newspapers have expressed uneasiness about the consequences of an American loan to Syria. *Yaqa, Hadara, and Barada* have continued to play upon the suspicions of more fanatical xenophobes by an occasional report on movements of British visitors to parts of Syria.

6. Newspapers generally express the belief that the Security Council will be less prejudiced than former commissions against the Arab cause in Palestine. Towards the end of the month there was a marked tendency to avoid over-estimating Arab ability to cope with the power of general Jewish interests and of Zionist terrorist formations. A slight attempt was made to increase distrust of Syrian Jews.

7. Transjordan has not been the object of major criticism during March. It was rumoured that she might withdraw from the Arab League; the transference of her consulate to Beirut failed to provoke a major recrudescence of the customary animosity.

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 2 FOR APRIL, 1947

I.—Political

1. Mr. and Mrs. P. Scrivener arrived in a Royal Air Force aircraft at Damascus on 2nd April; Mr. Scrivener presented his Letters of Credence as His Majesty's Minister to the Syrian Republic on 14th April. No speeches were made but the Syrian President welcomed His Majesty's Minister most cordially.

2. Naim bey Anteki's resignation from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was

accepted on 20th April (see Monthly Political No. 1, Section I, paragraph 1). No successor has yet been appointed and the Prime Minister, Jamil Mardem Bey, is acting *ad interim* as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

3. Internal political activity has again been considerable. Members of the new political party, now publicly named "the National Party" (see Monthly Political Summary No. 1, Section I, paragraph 2),

after further deliberations, have elected Saadullah Jabri as President, Lutfi Haffar as Vice-President, Sabri el Assali as Secretary-General, Mazhar Reslan as Controller-General, and Dr. Abdul Rahman Kayyali, who for the last two years has been considered an opponent of the Nationalist bloc, as Treasurer. Jamil Mardam does not appear among the list of officers.

4. In Parliament activity has been focused on the question of altering the existing electoral law. Under the present law elections take place, as in the Lebanon, until 1943 in two degrees, each 8,000 primary electors being entitled to return one Deputy to the Chamber. Early in April agitation began in the press and among the students for one-degree elections on the grounds that the present two-degree system was undemocratic, had been imposed by a foreign Power and was being maintained by a small ruling autocracy. The agitation rapidly gained momentum; student demonstrations took place in Damascus and in the other principal cities of Syria and every kind of pressure was used by the Parliamentary Opposition and by irresponsible elements to effect an alteration of the two-degree system. It is difficult to trace any one particular directing force behind the movement; doubtless the parliamentary opponents of the present Government wish to embarrass it, the Communists and the Labour Syndicates hope by one-degree elections to get one or more candidates into the Chamber and the students, as is their custom, are always ready to find an excuse for walking out of the schools. After a series of Government meetings and consultations with the President, the Prime Minister announced in Parliament that the Government would submit to the Chamber a new electoral law for one-degree elections. The first seven articles of a Bill to this effect were debated and approved on 28th April. The Bill contains sixty-one articles and, as it stands, proposes, *inter alia*, that all male Syrians over the age of 20 should vote, that there should be one Deputy to every 6,000 voters, and that the residential requirement for a prospective candidate should be at least one year.

5. This sudden agitation in favour of one-degree elections, resulting in a complete reversal of the Government's policy, is indicative of the inability of the Syrian Government to stand up to any kind of

popular outcry, however ill-considered or superficial it may be.

6. At a sitting of the Chamber on 24th April a Deputy raised the question of the financial loss to the Hejaz railway arising out of the destruction by Jewish terrorists of the Hemma bridge on 17th June, 1946, and suggested that the Syrian Government should demand an indemnity from the Government of Palestine. The Syrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs later asked His Majesty's Legation to enquire from the Government of Palestine what steps had been taken to repair the bridge and to reopen the railway.

7. The chairman of the Establishment Committee of the Chamber of Deputies informed the Chamber that his committee had finished its work in connexion with the establishment decrees of the various Ministries published in the *Official Gazette* of 17th October and would be submitting a report to the Chamber (see Weekly Political Summary No. 214 of the 2nd December, 1946). (This committee has been studying the alleged illegalities of the establishment decrees with a view to suggesting amendments).

8. The 17th and 18th April were notified as national holidays. On 17th April of last year celebrations were held to mark the final evacuation of foreign troops from Syria, but no mention of evacuation was made this year in any official programme or invitation, although large electrical signs were erected overlooking the town on Jebel Qassioum, reading in Arabic: "Evacuation of armies by our struggles." A parade of units of the Syrian armed forces and various youth organisations took place in front of the President of the Republic, members of the Government, representatives of the Arab States, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and a crowd of some 150,000. Receptions were given by the President, Minister of Defence and the Minister of Education to which foreign representatives were invited; and similar parades were held in other Syrian towns. In both Damascus and Aleppo decorated carts paraded the streets containing tableaux showing the destruction of French troops by Syrians fighting for freedom. In Damascus this manifestation passed unnoticed by the French as the cart did not appear in daylight, and took no part in the official programme; but in Aleppo a cart took part in the march past, whereupon the French Consul left immediately and protested by hauling down

the flag which had been flying on the French Consulate. Subsequently His Majesty's Consul in Aleppo took the Mohafez to task for not having ensured that the tableaux could cause no offence to any foreign representative.

9. At two meetings of the Political Committee of the Arab League which were held in Damascus on the 16th and 17th April it was agreed that the Arab States should ask for a motion to be put on the agenda of the Special Session of the United Nations Organisation demanding the immediate termination of the British Mandate and independence for Palestine. In conversation with the oriental secretary Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha, after dismissing Palestine in a few words, dealt at length with the future of the Arab peoples in North Africa. He spoke bitterly of French oppression in Tunis, Algeria and Morocco and made it clear that the Arab League proposed to present the matter to the United Nations as soon as Palestine has been disposed of. Turning to Cyrenaica and Libya he suggested that if a trusteeship was set up under the Arab League or if the countries were given autonomy under the crown of Egypt, it would no doubt be possible for the British to have such military bases there as would enable them to evacuate completely the Nile Valley without weakening their strategic position in the Middle East.

10. His Majesty's Consul at Aleppo has continued to report increased Communist activities particularly in connexion with the forthcoming elections. Frequent meetings are held, pamphlets are issued in the usual violently anti-British vein and labour strikes and troubles fomented. Reports indicate that new adherents have been gained amongst the teachers and junior army officers and that a determined attempt has been made to place party members in the various Christian and Moslem organisations in the Aleppo area.

11. Early in April a bus containing amongst others a Druze religious notable was attacked and stoned by Arab villagers of Sheikh Meskin, a village near the Druze boundary. An indignation meeting was called at Soueida and some 1,200 armed Druze set out to square the account. Prompt action by the Syrian Gendarmerie prevented bloodshed but considerable ill-feeling remains.

12. Rear-Admiral McCarthy, Commanding Mediterranean Destroyers, visited Damascus unofficially from Beirut on 26th

April and was received by the Syrian President.

13. A decree has been signed appointing Farid Zein Eddin (Syrian Personality No. 138) as Syrian Minister to Moscow; he is at present a member of the Syrian delegation to the Special Session of the United Nations Organisation. It is learnt that the Syrian Prime Minister made personal representations to the Russian Minister on Farid Zein Eddin's behalf and that at the third attempt the refusal of the Russian Government to grant their agreement (see Weekly Political Summary No. 7, Section I, paragraph 8) was withdrawn.

The agreement of the French Government has been asked to the appointment of Khaled el Azm (Syrian Personality No. 27) as special representative and also Minister in Paris to undertake financial and economic negotiations on outstanding problems.

14. Afif Solh left Damascus for Bagdad on 8th April to take up his post as Syrian Minister.

15. Hassan Jabbara left on 16th April to act as Syrian representative to the Geneva Conference of the International Trade Organisation.

II.—Economic

1. During the past few weeks a vigorous campaign has been launched by large landowners and farmers to convince the public that the 1947 cereal crops will be bad; the two British advisers to the Syrian MIRA consider that in fact the crops will be little if any smaller than last year. The Council of Ministers have, however, agreed to maintain the MIRA purchasing monopoly during the forthcoming season and have agreed that the prices paid for cereals shall be the same as last year.

2. The sale of Syrian wheat and barley to Italy (see Monthly Political Summary No. 1, Section III) has not been completed. The Syrian President personally intervening as a result of reports of bad crops, after 4,000 tons of wheat had been exported. No grain was exported to Rumania as the necessary credit was never opened by the Rumanians.

3. The Prime Minister has announced that a Civil Aviation Air Agreement was signed between Syria and the United States on 28th April.

4. The Minister of Defence is still negotiating for the purchase of about twenty American military aircraft of various

types. According to press reports the aircraft are to be delivered in the near future, though so far no definite agreement has been reached.

5. A British "Bristol Freighter 170" was demonstrated at Damascus on 29th April to representatives of the army and civil aviation.

6. The Syrian Civil Aviation Company announced that from 20th April the following services would be operated with Dakota aircraft:—

External. — Cairo—Angora—Istanbul—Bagdad—Beirut.

Internal. — Damascus—Aleppo—Deir- ez-Zor—Hasetche.

No regular service had, however, been started.

7. After the examination of tenders submitted by sixteen firms for telephones and broadcasting installations, tenders presented by the following six firms were retained for further consideration:—

- (1) Standard Telephones and Cables, Limited, London.
- (2) Ericsons, London.
- (3) Ericsons, Stockholm.
- (4) Thomson Houston, Paris.
- (5) Marconi, London.
- (6) M. Pregnar, Czechoslovakia.

The only firm who have tendered for the entire project is Standard Telephones and Cables, Limited, of London. Ericsons, Stockholm, submitted complete tenders for the telephone project. Marconi and Thomson Houston, Paris, submitted for the broadcasting part. Ericsons, London, submitted offers only for magneto and semi-automatic telephones. M. Pregnar, Czechoslovakia, made an offer for telegraph poles. While the financial aspects of the tenders have not yet been examined by the committee, it is thought that should the Syrian Government decide to carry out the complete project as envisaged by the P.T.T. Directorate, the Standard Telephones and Cables, Limited, London, stand a very good chance of obtaining the contract, with Ericsons, Stockholm, as a keen competitor.

8. M. Van Zeeland, the Belgian economic expert who was invited by the Lebanese Government to advise them on economic matters, called on the Syrian President on 24th April. He had conversations with the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Finance, National Economy and Public Works, and it is understood

that he was invited to visit Syria again in a few weeks' time to examine the economic situation.

During the past two months there have been considerable changes in the wholesale price levels, e.g. :—

	<i>Per cent.</i>
Cotton goods generally	25-35 decrease
Silk goods generally	5-7 decrease
Haberdashery, nylon stockings	30-35 decrease
Cereals	15 increase
Cement	100 increase

It is thought that a further lowering of the wholesale price levels may be expected for those goods for which a decrease has already been mentioned. This trend has not so far been reflected in retail prices.

III.—Press

1. During April the Damascus newspapers led the struggle for a reform of the electoral system culminating in what they have called "a triumph of the public will" over the Government. Three or four fell victims to suspension in the first half of the month, but despite these casualties the rest displayed what quickly grew into a total and most remarkable unity of purpose. Many newspapers are now following up the engagement by demanding further—but minor—improvements of the electoral system.

2. Before the curtain rose on the Evacuation Day celebrations some newspapers murmured against the high cost of the production and asked whether public money might not be more usefully spent. A mordant cat-call from *Manar* (Ikwan el Muslimin) begged the actors "not to pose as saviours." But the festivities got an excellent press and levity and criticism were swept aside by a spate of auto-panegyrics, with seasonable anti-French dressings.

3. On 14th April *Barada* referred scathingly to what it called the Iraqi-Transjordanian "family conference" in Amman. It accused Transjordan, Iraq, Turkey, Britain and the Zionists of being implicated in plots against the Arab League. It was reported verbally that the Iraqi Foreign Minister, in protest against this article, refused to come to Damascus for the meeting of the Arab League Political Committee until the Syrian Government had taken action against

Barada. The newspaper was suspended. The conclusions reached by the committee were fully reported and newspapers generally approved the co-ordination of Arab viewpoints on the Palestine question. They made little comment on the Egyptian

attempt to place the mandate question on the New York agenda.

4. There has been little criticism of Turkey during April. Reports of meetings between Syrian and Turkish representatives have been current.

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No. 31

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 3, MAY 1947

(Received 25th June)

I.—Political

During the month His Majesty's Minister paid a visit of two days to the High Commissioner in Jerusalem (20th and 21st May) and to His Majesty's Minister at Amman (22nd–23rd May); on his way back from Amman he visited the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies. His Majesty's Minister and Mrs. Scrivener spent from 15th to 17th May in Aleppo as the guests of His Majesty's Consul and had the opportunity of meeting the British community there and a number of local notables.

2. The eighth ordinary session of the Syrian Chamber of Deputies expired on 31st May when the Prime Minister, in a speech summing up Syria's achievements during the life of the Parliament, ended by saying that in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution the life of the Parliament was ended.

3. Early in the month the Chamber passed the new electoral law providing for one degree elections. No other major alterations to the previous law were made, though a number of detailed changes were included which were reported in Damascus despatch No. 66 of 30th May to the Foreign Office. A decree was issued on 21st May providing for the holding of elections on 7th July. Under the new electoral law nominations must be received not later than the night of 22nd June.

4. A number of Bills were passed by the Chamber during the course of the month, of which the most important are:—

(a) A Bill authorising the Government to issue legislative decrees covering the establishments of the various Government departments. The Bill was based on the report furnished to the Chamber by the Establishment Committee set up to study the establishment decrees published in the *Syrian Official Journal* on 17th October, 1946. The legality of these decrees was questioned in the

Chamber at the time, and certain articles, particularly in the decree dealing with the Ministry of the Interior, created widespread dissatisfaction and led to rioting in Damascus and other cities, the offending decree being suspended by a vote of the Chamber in November. During the debate on this Bill the Government agreed that the new establishment decrees would be fully debated by the Chamber of Deputies in March 1948.

(b) A Bill extending the Syrian Mira (grain and cereals monopoly organisation) until 25th June, 1948, and fixing the prices to be paid by Mira, as follows:—

	<i>Per ton</i> <i>£ Syrian</i>
Wheat	340
White barley	205
Black barley	200

These prices are the same as last year, but the permitted percentage of dirt has been raised from 4 per cent. to 7 per cent.

(c) A number of Bills were passed authorising interest-free loans to various municipalities. Opposition members have on several occasions suggested that these loans will be used for election purposes.

(d) A Bill reducing by 40 per cent. the taxes on sheep in areas suffering from drought. In the debate on this Bill the question of the agricultural development scheme submitted to the Chamber some years ago was raised. The Minister of National Economy, replying, stated that an agricultural scheme was being studied by the Council of Ministers. This probably refers to a scheme put forward by the American Agricultural Mission which visited Syria in the spring of 1946.

(e) A Bill authorising sentences of hard labour on persons convicted either of selling or intervening in selling lands to Zionists or of being implicated in the smuggling of Jews to Palestine.

(f) A Bill allocating 100,000 Syrian pounds for the aid of Arabs in Libya and Tunis.

5. The prospects for the forthcoming elections are still extremely obscure. It appears most improbable that Saadullah Jabri will be able to take any part in the elections, and it is doubtful whether his name will even appear on the electoral lists. Jamil Mardam Bey, in the middle of the month, visited Aleppo and its neighbourhood in order to form his own views of the political situation there. A number of minor groups have been busily canvassing for support for their candidates, but the main question remains unanswered, viz., whether the President of the Republic and Jamil Mardam will work together. Should they decide to do so there is little doubt that no opposition in the country could stand against them. The one degree electoral law has, however, encouraged such groups as the Communists, the Federation of Trade Unions, the Monarchists, &c., to feel that they may have some chance of obtaining one or more seats in the new Chamber.

6. Although the Lebanese elections have come in for much unfavourable comment in connexion with the malpractices widely reported to have taken place, the results have given satisfaction in Government circles. It is to be hoped, however, that the unfavourable comment on the Lebanese elections will have the effect of discouraging the Syrian Government from following suit. The Prime Minister has stated to the press that all Mohafezes have received instructions to ensure free voting and that the Mohafezes will be held personally responsible should any illegalities take place.

7. A decree has been issued authorising the Government to collect arms from the public, and giving a time-limit of fifteen days from the beginning of June during which the public may hand in their arms against a promise of payment. The decree specifically applies also to tribal areas.

8. The month has seen Greater Syria politics less to the fore despite the publication by Ahmed Shuraiqi in Amman of the White Book setting out arguments in

favour of the project. The supporters of the monarchist Greater Syria appear to be growing disheartened at the lack of any considerable financial support from Amman and the absence of any definite promise of support from King Abdullah.

9. 29th May was celebrated in Damascus and other Syrian towns as the anniversary of French aggression on Syria. Meetings were held and processions took place but no incidents were reported.

10. Khaled el Azm left Damascus for France on 31st May to take up his post as Syrian Minister at Paris, Brussels and Berne. Haidar Mardam Bey left Damascus on 4th May to take up his post as Syrian Minister at Jedda.

11. Ten Syrian army officers left during April for a year's course at Sandhurst.

II.—Press

1. At the beginning of the month, well satisfied with its successful advocacy of one degree elections, the press was in a mood to become the champion of popular rights and to stay more closely united. Since then it has split up again into the familiar and opposing groups, and the high principles of early May are no longer supported by all editors. Opposition papers have continued to exploit the earlier disadvantage of the Government by demanding further reform of the electoral system; abolition of the residence condition, for instance, and even votes for women. But their support for such improvements is being undermined by a growing uneasiness over Government attempts to prejudice in advance a fair outcome of the elections. Government appeals to officials to act with strict impartiality have not assured the Opposition press of its good intentions of which, according to *Beled*, the only proof would be for the present Cabinet to resign and hand over to a caretaker Administration. Many newspapers have raised the scare of foreign intervention by bribery in both the Lebanese and Syrian elections. The avoidance of foreign supervision of the elections has been advanced by pro-Government papers as a reason for deprecating the attempts of their rivals to expose the methods or to annul the results of the Government success at the Lebanese polls, achieved, according to a statement by Jamil Mardam Bey, "in an atmosphere of the most complete freedom."

2. Optimism over the United Nations handling of the Palestine question has

given way to despondency. Editors were disappointed to find that, instead of the expected "walk-over" for the Arabs, the New York meeting revealed that the attitude of other nations was not identical with that of the Arab States. Those who, in the first days of the disillusion, hoped for Soviet support were quickly disappointed. Many newspapers began to lay the blame upon the Arab spokesmen and the inadequacy of their methods. Disquieting reports of Jewish terrorist activities have made them more cautious about asserting that force is the only means by which the Arab States can obtain their rights. Failure to have the question of immediate independence for Palestine placed within the competence of the Fact-Finding Commission was received by petulant threats of withdrawal from United Nations Organisation, subsequently narrowed down to suggestions that the committee be boycotted. Russia has emerged badly from

comment upon the New York meeting. America has been attacked more bitterly for supporting the Jews. Great Britain has come off more lightly as a result of the Palestine case being viewed against a broader background.

3. Incidents in the Beirut customs and at a Syrian-Lebanese net-ball match, and a pro-Syrian demonstration in Tripoli have been used as material for the expression of impatience with the Lebanon, which has now become an important minor theme of the Damascus press.

4. Reports of a Russian offer to support Syria's claim to Alexandretta brought no comment, except the demand for an official communiqué to clarify the matter.

5. Little comment was made either on the publication of the Transjordanian White Paper or about the ceremonies, which were described by only one newspaper.

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 4 FOR JUNE, 1947

(Received 18th July)

I.—Political

1. Mr. Vaughan-Russell, His Majesty's Consul at Aleppo, left his post on transfer on 17th June and handed over to Mr. H. A. Shadforth.

2. During the month Syria has been filled with surmise from all quarters on the forthcoming elections. Candidates, from whom no deposit is required, have nominated in exaggerated numbers. In Aleppo there are, for example, 173 candidates for fifteen seats. The remarkable features of the elections have been, however, the absence up to a week before polling day of any party programmes, either from the Government-sponsored "National" Party or from the Opposition parties; and the uncertainty which exists as to the lists on which candidates, be they members of the Government or of the Opposition, will offer themselves for election. It would seem certain that the Government must, in the absence of any united opposition, be returned; but it is likely that members of the Opposition parties will be included on the "National" Party lists to spike their guns in advance. The electorate will go to the poll in this first completely independent election in

Syrian history to vote on the basis of individual candidates' past records and promises for the future.

3. The Government has promised that the elections shall be conducted in full freedom. Syrians do not accept this promise with any great confidence, and point to the failure of the authorities to collect privately-held unauthorised arms, even though the period for the handing in of arms was extended by ten days, and to the suspension of an Opposition paper for a month contrary to the Government's promise of freedom for the press. There have been no major disturbances in the urban areas during the month, but this is probably the result of the uncertainty about parties and programmes.

4. In the middle of the month (10th-18th June), the President toured the north of the country and paid visits to Homs, Hama, Latakia and Aleppo. It is thought that the purpose of his visits was to encourage candidates who will support him in his attempt for re-election next August, and, in Aleppo, to try and arrive at some personal arrangement with the chief Opposition leaders—an effort which was believed to have been unsuccessful.

The Prime Minister made the same tour last month, and there is still no indication whether Shukri Bey and Jamil Bey have decided whether they will come to an agreement or fight each other on this issue.

5. In the Jebel Druse the elections have had an explosive effect. At Soueida, the Mohafez, the Emir Hassan Atrash, refused to accept on 23rd June the nomination of a member of the Abu Assali family, on the grounds that he had failed to resign from a Government post before putting up his candidature. The Assali family thereupon assaulted the Sérail, and arms were used. At a meeting held on 30th June in Aéré, sponsored by the Atrashes, and attended by some 10,000 Druse tribesmen, all armed, Sultan Pasha Atrash issued a manifesto stating that the Government was interfering in the elections in the Jebel Druse, and calling for a boycott of the elections unless the Government resigned and appointed a neutral Cabinet to supervise the elections. It seems most probable that the Government has, indeed, tried to pursue a policy of undermining the authority of the Atrashes, who are the hereditary leaders of the Druses, by supporting the claims of lesser families to fill the key posts. The "National" Party has certainly subsidised the election expenses of Jamil Abu Assail and a certain Izzedoin el Halabi, and this financial incentive has opened up a rift in the Druse ranks. The Emir Hassan is infuriated by this conduct, and has sent emissaries of the Atrash family to talk to King Abdulfah. So far the pattern is not vastly different from that of the last elections in 1943, but the issue may be more serious because dissatisfaction with the Government is also felt by certain tribes in the Hauran, among them the Tai'm and the Leger, both of whom, though hereditary enemies of the Druses, may be prepared to work with them politically in this instance. The main question awaiting an answer seems to be whether, as a result of the Soueida incident and of the bribery of other Druse families, the Atrashes will still retain their leadership of the Druses.

6. On 20th June Saadullah Jabri Bey died in Aleppo. His death removed a politician whose prestige in Syria was second only to the President's; and coming in the midst of the election campaign it confused yet more the uncertain electoral picture, for he had held until his death the presidency of the "National" Party.

7. On 21st June a meeting was held of a newly-formed committee of the Hejaz Railway, attended by representatives of all the States through whose territory the line runs. Proposals were made to put the line in running order over the whole of its former length; the delegate from Palestine underlined a few of the difficulties, and the meeting adjourned without reaching any decisions. It will reassemble on 21st July.

8. In Aleppo a case was heard before the Court of First Instance of a man from the Alexandretta Liwa who entered Syria without a passport. Judgment was given that Syria had never recognised the agreement which gave Alexandretta to Turkey, and that the man should, therefore, be granted the rights of a Syrian national.

9. Sir A. S. Kirkbride passed through Damascus on 6th June *en route* for the United Kingdom on leave. The Ministers of Greece and of Sweden in Cairo, who have now been accredited to Syria, presented their credentials to the President of the Republic on 24th June.

10. An Indonesian Delegation arrived from Cairo on 23rd June, and, according to press reports, was endeavouring to negotiate a treaty of friendship with the Syrian Government.

11. The Prime Minister went to Cairo on 5th June to attend a meeting of the Arab League Political Committee, and returned on 7th June. Faiz El Khoury (Syrian Personalities, No. 86), left to take up his post as Minister at Washington on 14th June, and Farid Zein Eddine (Syrian Personalities, No. 138), left for Moscow to take up his post as Minister to Russia on 26th June.

II.—Press

1. By the beginning of June the conduct of the Lebanese elections had forced upon Damascus newspapers a clear division into such groups as they intended to form in preparation for the Syrian electoral battle in July. The Opposition press seemed convinced that its rivals could be placed at a disadvantage if driven to contest the election according to more moral rules. They demanded that the Lebanese elections be declared null and void; they made allegations of Government interference and intimidation; they said that the present leaders had fought the French only for the opportunity of snatching from them the right to exhibit the people. Throughout the month they called upon the Cabinet to resign and make way for a caretaker

administration which could supervise the elections impartially. Some student bodies joined them in this demand. The Government press, anxious to avoid supervision or revision of the old electoral practices but unable to forgo paying at least lip-service to reform, shifted the argument over to the safer international field and stressed the dangers of foreign interference, whether underhand or invited, in order to ensure fair play. They emphasised the President's determination to allow freedom of expression, and quoted him as saying "if you must intervene, intervene only to prevent intervention." They described the enthusiastic acclamations which he had received during his tour of Syria as being tantamount to "a plebiscite in favour of the Republican system." The Opposition newspapers remained unmoved except to rage when the Prime Minister, who last month declared the Lebanese elections to have been held "in an atmosphere of perfect freedom," further exasperated the majority of editors by predicting failure for all who oppose the Government. A leading Opposition newspaper published a series of articles on British electoral procedure.

2. Throughout the month local commentators have only rarely allowed news from other countries to distract them from their

preoccupation with the elections. They have made repeated but secondary references to the Palestine problem. Opinion was, at first, divided as to whether the Arab States should boycott U.N.S.C.O.P. But when the Arab League Political Committee decided against it, it was said to have "neglected a religious and racial duty." The Fact-Finding Commission has won no praise. Comment upon it has ranged from the expression of complete lack of faith in its abilities to allegations of its partiality. Most newspapers published the appeal to strike put out by the Higher Arab Committee; only one (an Opposition newspaper) urged its readers to comply. A parallel between the Arab and British positions has been drawn from their intentions to reject an unworkable solution. Passing comment has been made on Terrorist activities and, as usual, some newspapers have urged the Arabs to resolve the problem by the sword. By the end of June most papers tended to drop even the Palestine question.

3. The anniversary of the shelling of Damascus brought forward commemorative abuse of the French. The escape of Abd-el-Kerim and the refusal to allow a Red Crescent mission into Tunisia kept up the high temperature of anti-French comment for a number of days.

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 5 FOR JULY 1947

(Received 25th August)

I.—Political

Parliamentary elections were held on 7th and 8th July, and "ballotages" for the undecided seats on 17th and 18th July (Damascus despatches Nos. 72 and 86). Internal politics were thus the preoccupation of Syrians for the first half of the month; but on 19th July the commencement of Ramadan caused a general lull. The election results confounded the prophets, and marked a considerable defeat of the Government-sponsored "National" list by the Opposition parties. The "ballotage" proceedings were boycotted by the "Union of Ulama," a Moslem group which had scored some success in the earlier proceedings in alliance with the Ikhwan el Muslimin. In fact, the activities of the union led to their dissolution

and the transfer of their property to the Wakfs administration. They represent a highly reactionary trend of thought and their programme had created anxiety in Christian circles.

2. The complexion of the new Chamber cannot yet be definitely foreseen, since some 55 of the 136 Deputies, all new men, have no known political allegiance. Some twenty-eight Deputies will probably adhere to the "National" Party, and some fifty-three to the Opposition. All the former Ministers were re-elected, though not all were candidates on the "National" list, and the present Government have continued in office. Elections were conducted with surprisingly little Government interference, save in Damascus during the "ballotage" operations, where pressure

was exerted to ensure the success of certain ex-Ministers, and a somewhat apathetic electorate found their fears of bloodshed unfulfilled. The Prime Minister appears satisfied with the election results; the President's reactions are less clear, and will depend on the attitude of that unknown factor, the unpledged newcomers. Meanwhile many sets of statistics have been produced, among the more ingenious being a classification of the Chamber by headdress: Ninety Deputies wear the tarbush and western clothes, forty-three wear the keffiyeh, two wear turbans and one a qalmaq (a Kurdish headdress). One newspaper, in deploring the defeat of so many members of the former Chamber, described the newcomers as "nylon" Deputies—a word borrowed by Syrian slang to describe tawdry foreign goods.

3. In the Jebel Druze elections were postponed for a week whilst the Atrash and Assali factions composed their differences and submitted their lists of candidates. All those elected were of the Atrash list, to the chagrin of the Assalis, who proceeded to foment further "popular" indignation against the "fendal lords." The Mohafez, the Emir Hassan Atrash, asked in vain for Government gendarmes to maintain order, and on 30th July the Assalis evicted by force all Atrashes from the Salkhad area and assumed charge there in the name, as they said, of the Government of Syria. Both sides have appealed to Damascus for a decision, which has not been forthcoming; so far the Atrash, who as the appointed rulers have the law on their side, have not resorted to force. A reliable source reported that the Government was unwilling to send gendarmerie to the area, because it feared the request to be a ruse designed to lure Government forces within the power of the Druze tribes.

4. The statement in the House of Commons on 14th July of His Majesty's Government's attitude towards "Greater Syria" aroused little apparent interest. The Damascus papers reported it, generally without comment; it was printed in only two Aleppo papers.

5. The Indonesian delegation, which arrived from Cairo on 23rd June, left for Bagdad on 4th July, and passed through Syria again on its return journey on 24th July. On 2nd July it was announced that a treaty of friendship had been signed between Syria and Indonesia. The head of the political section of the Ministry for

Foreign Affairs stated that the pact was less comprehensive in its terms than that concluded with Egypt, and added that no commercial clause was included. The text of the treaty has not yet been published.

6. The Prime Minister and the Emir Adel Arslan (Minister of Education) represented Syria at the U.N.S.C.O.P. meeting with the Arab States at Sofar, Lebanon, on 24th July. Emir Adel Arslan has been nominated to represent Syria during the proceedings of the committee at Geneva in August. Members of U.N.S.C.O.P. visited Damascus on 21st July from the Lebanon, but no official meetings were held.

7. The Syrian Prime Minister took the opportunity of the presence of Lebanese, Iraqi and Saudi Arabian representatives at Sofar to discuss with them the question of the instructions to be given to the Syrian delegate on the Security Council as regards his attitude when the Anglo-Egyptian dispute came up for discussion at New York. During the last two months continual efforts, direct and indirect, have been made to bring clearly before the Syrian Government the importance to the whole Arab world of the issues involved in that dispute; and also the rather equivocal position in which the Syrian Government, as a member of the Security Council, had placed themselves by their adherence to the resolution of the Arab League of 23rd March, promising full support to Egypt. These efforts were not entirely successful, but it is doubtful whether the Syrians could have gone further than they have, and in the event the instructions given to Faris Khoury Bey, so far as known, are more satisfactory than might well have been the case.

8. The Syrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs have confirmed that negotiations are in progress for the resumption of diplomatic relations with Italy and for the exchange of representatives. The Italian representative is unlikely to arrive until the autumn.

9. On 26th July a number of Transjordan *émigrés* held a conference in Damascus. Dr. Ghanimeh was elected president, and an anti-Abdullah manifesto was issued. It seems possible that the decision taken to create a propaganda office in Damascus may be implemented. After the conference His Majesty's Minister received a telegram putting forward the "free Transjordanians" claims.

10. On 21st July a second meeting of the Hejaz Railway committee was held in Damascus, and was attended by representatives of Syria, Palestine and Transjordan. Although a preliminary survey of part of the route has been approved, it seems probable that the cost of reconstructing the line will prove too high for the Governments concerned.

11. On 28th July the King of Iraq passed through Syria *en route* for the United Kingdom. No public ceremony took place, but the President of the Republic drove some miles out into the desert to meet His Majesty; and the Prime Minister escorted him from Damascus to the Lebanese frontier. These compliments represented a very special gesture on the part of the Syrians, and appear to have been highly appreciated by the Iraklis. The Irak Minister for Foreign Affairs took the occasion to have conversations with the Syrian Prime Minister. The President remarked to His Majesty's Minister that his gesture had been prompted by affection "for a nation which is a member of one's own family."

12. Brigadier Clayton arrived in Damascus for a visit on 23rd July, and was entertained by the President and by the Prime Minister. He left for Beirut on 28th July.

13. The Moroccan leader Abdul Khalek Torres recently visited Damascus accompanied by a Dr. Selim. He attended meetings of the Ikhwan el Muslimeen and the Arab Club, and gave interviews to journalists. He also delivered a lecture on the Moroccan question.

14. Mr. James S. Moose left Damascus on 10th July for Washington, and Mr. Robert B. Memminger assumed duty as American Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*. Saleh el-Maffar, who has been appointed honorary vice-consul at Manchester, left Syria by air for England on 26th July. During the month Constantine Zureik, the former Syrian Minister at Washington, returned to Syria and is taking up the post of vice-president of the American University at Beirut. Omar Bey Rishi, director of the National Library at Aleppo, is leaving shortly for a year's tour of North and South America on behalf of the Arab Office.

15. The legation regrets that it reported, incorrectly, in Political Summary No. 4, the departure of Farid Zein Eddins for Moscow. He has not yet left for his post.

II.—Press

During early July the main emphasis of press comment was exclusively upon the Syrian elections. Later it moved to the Palestine question and the Anglo-Egyptian difference.

2. The Opposition press, in the week before the elections, continued to abuse and condemn the Government. The intensification of its attacks was good for sales (*Nidal* selling for £1 Syrian a copy) but costly in another way. *Baath*, *Ayyam*, *Hadara* and later *Manar* all fell victims to the Government's power of suspension, a weapon which in a press conference only a few weeks ago the Prime Minister had promised never to wield again. Reproachfully, but in vain, the remaining Opposition papers reminded him of this promise. During the election they continued to charge the Government with fraud. The results surprised them. *Insha* and *Qabas* accused the Damascenes of "ingratitude," but even middle-of-the-road papers derived some pleasure from what they called "a lesson for the feudal," "a slight swing to the Left" (*Nasr*), and spoke of the "legality of the election procedure."

3. Before the "ballotage" the initiative passed to the Government press, which made a desperate attempt to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat by accusing all who opposed it of complicity in the Greater Syria plot. It raised the bogeys of "foreign hands" and "foreign gold," &c., when referring to the success of the Ulema. *Barada's* innuendoes were, as usual, more vicious than the rest and contained allusions to "British delight at the results of the elections." The events of the "ballotage" made *Nidal* fulminate more indignantly than before against the dishonesty of the Government. Its proprietor threatened to relinquish his seat in the new Parliament if those Deputies who obtained their seats at the ballotage were allowed to set foot in the Chamber.

4. Interest in the Palestine question—formerly confined to offensive remarks about the members, legality and competence of U.N.S.C.O.P.—now revived. *Alef Ba*, showing signs of weariness with the whole question, censured America for unwanted interference and Britain for her weakness. But *Balad* laid the whole blame upon Britain. Led by *Barada*, some papers urged the Arabs to counter terrorism by terrorism. Others

did not approve so wild a course. The press in general made pessimistic forecasts of the findings of the commission.

5. Its strong sense of Arab union made the Syrian press incapable of impartiality on the Anglo-Egyptian difference which moved into prominence in late July. On this subject Britain was denounced more fiercely than over the Palestine question. *Barada* led the onslaught by a series of articles which depicted British aims as those of a "coloniser," interested only in the raw materials of the Sudan and its geographical position as the potential nucleus for an African empire. *Balad* threatened that the Arab States would not take the British side in a fight with the Russians. *Qabas* asserted that all Arabs

were ready to take up arms on Egypt's behalf. *Akhar* even committed them to a war upon the United Nations. *Balad* quoted Mr. Churchill on the unity of Egypt and the Sudan. During the last few days of the month the press, with great indignation, published a rumour that Britain had asked Syria to withdraw Faris Khouri from United Nations Organisation.

6. Secondary themes were:—

French misbehaviour in North Africa.

British misrule of Libya.

British desertion of King Abdullah (*Barada* again).

Nasr appealed to the Government to rescue young King Feisal from the British who had undone his grandfather and his father.

E 8738/171/89

No. 34

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 6 FOR AUGUST 1947

I.—Political

On 7th August a decree was published announcing the names of successful candidates in the elections; validation of the elections is the prerogative of the Chamber itself. Since this date public opinion has demanded the early convocation of Parliament and the formation of a new Cabinet. Jamil's Cabinet has remained in office despite this clamour, as constitutionally it is entitled to do.

The names of Jebel Druze Deputies were not announced at the time, nor have they yet been announced. This refusal has no legal support; and appears to be a convenient governmental artifice to maintain tension in the Jebel and to decrease the influence of the Attrash family. A reliable source has said that a committee appointed to supervise elections in the Jebel did in fact report, inconveniently, that the elections had been fair, whereupon the Prime Minister ordered the dissolution of the committee. The stratagem has succeeded in producing a stalemate between the opposing forces in the Jebel, and has prevented the Attrash party and the Assali party from patching up their differences and presenting a united front to the Government.

King Abdullah's manifesto on Greater Syria, which was released on 12th August and made its first appearance, inauspiciously, by a quotation in a Damascus

paper from the B.B.C., caused more stir even than usually is given to such pronouncements. Mohammed Pasha el Shureiki arrived in Damascus to present a mollifying personal letter to the President on 16th August, too late to overcome the ill-feeling engendered by the manner in which the King's manifesto had been spread broadcast throughout the republic. On 25th the Prime Minister, at a press conference, did not pull his punches in reply. On 27th the President of Syria met the President of the Lebanon at Beit ed Din, and issued a more temperate, but unequivocal communiqué. And to marshal the States members of the Arab League against the manifesto, the Secretary-General of the Presidency was sent to Riyadh and on to Cairo, and the Syrian Minister to Iraq interrupted his holiday in Syria to visit Bagdad. This considerable interest and ire is partly due, perhaps, to the fact that Syrians, jaded and on edge at the end of Ramadan, came to the fray with the vigour induced by normal living; more, perhaps, because they feel that the timing of the announcement was calculated by "a foreign hand" to distract Arab attention from the two main questions of the hour, the Egyptian case and Palestine. As such, Transjordan's pretensions must be disposed of out of hand, leaving the stage free for weightier matters.

The Egyptian case has been closely followed in the press (see press summary) and Faris al Khouri is the man of the hour in Syria. The Government, whilst assuring the legation in confidence that Faris has failed to implement his instructions, has not neglected to accept such popular acclaim as has come its way. Were Faris to be recalled before the hearing was concluded, the Government would be hard put to retain its popularity.

On 4th August Dr. Alberto Vinas presented his credentials as Argentine Minister to Syria. On 9th Farid Zein ed Din left to take up his appointment as Syrian Minister at Moscow.

On 25th August a party of 600 Syrian Armenians from the Aleppo district left Beirut on a Soviet ship for Russia. It is said that some 6,000 more await repatriation; but this seems an inordinately high number.

In the course of a visit to North Syria, His Majesty's Minister took the opportunity of presenting to Edmond Homsy the ribbon of the C.B.E. and Ibrahim Hammoudi the ribbon of the King's Medal for Service in the Cause of Freedom.

II.—Press

The Damascus press is developing a classic curve of reactions to the deliberations of the Security Council—optimism, disillusion, indifference to the proceedings as soon as they cease to fit its book, and finally a preference for seeking a solution by force of arms; its last resort in most political matters involving States further afield than Transjordan. Over the Anglo-Egyptian question the curve was less pronounced than in the Palestine question earlier this year. In early August the newspaper expected Egypt to win her case. "Right," "Justice," &c., were said to be on the Egyptian side. Britain was at least in the wrong and commentators differed only as to the asperity of the mood in which they opposed the British point of view. When a resumption of bilateral negotiations was proposed, the Security Council was accused of trying to wriggle out of its responsibilities. Some papers began to say that Egypt would get what she wanted regardless of any United Nations decision. By the end of the month even *Alef Ba*—usually the least irresponsible—had said that if Egypt lost her case a third war would follow.

When two British soldiers were hanged by terrorists, some papers accused the

British of cowardice in not avenging their loss. Clashes between Arabs and Jews a few days later soon deprived the Anglo-Egyptian problem of its prominence. The newspapers asked whether the hour had not struck for a general Arab revolt and one newspaper (*Barada*) urged the Arab States to attack the Jews living within their frontiers. After President Quwatli had declared in mid-August "We are ready to defend Palestine when the hour strikes," Jamal Husseini's suggestion that Arabs fill up the country by immigration did not satisfy the press. Settlement by the sword was demanded by such pens as were not occupied on the Greater Syrian question, which by the end of the month had loomed up very large.

About the middle of August King Abdullah's plans for a Syrian federation brought sharp and voluminous opposition from the Damascus press. The papers with pro-Government leanings and *Barada* led the outcry against what they called an "Anglo-Zionist" plan. Others were reproachful rather than angry and a few ignored the subject completely. The visit of Shureika Pasha to Damascus and the travels undertaken by other Arab delegates were given wide publicity. A report in *Nidal*, which said that King Abdullah had threatened to take "effective measures to implement his plans," brought renewed howls of vituperation from *Barada*, *Insha* and *Qabas*. *Manar* was forced regretfully to the conclusion that party differences in Syria had been forgotten in face of Abdullah's "catastrophic plan for colonisation." When Shureiki Pasha returned to Amman, *Barada* announced that his mission had failed. Excited interest continued to be shown in the matter right up to the end of the month.

Most papers reported fully on the situation in the Jebel Druze, while *Barada*, when interest threatened to die down, fanned the flame with lurid descriptions of clashes and friction in that region. Little comment came from other quarters.

Tapline negotiations occasioned almost no adverse comment, most papers favouring Government determination to obtain Syrian demands. One or two wanted the demands to be made public and after the signing of the agreement continued to ask for publication of the terms. There has been speculation as to the date of parliamentary session and unity among Opposition Deputies has been urged.

On 14th August before a Penal Court of First Instance, Mr. Georges Faris, Reuter's correspondent in Damascus, was sentenced to a term of eighteen months

imprisonment when found guilty on a charge of issuing news likely to disturb public tranquillity. The press mainly allowed the sentence to pass unchallenged.

E 10404/171/89

No. 35

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 7 FOR SEPTEMBER 1947

(Received 7th November)

I.—Political

For the first half of the month public interest was fixed on Greater Syria; interest was maintained by the attention which the press continued to give to it by rumours, flattering to Syrian vanity, of important conferences held between the President and emissaries sent to him by heads of Arab States, and by harangues in the mosques. Mustafa Sebai, the head of the Syrian Ikhwan el Muslimeen, denounced King Abdullah's manifesto as a Zionist-colonising plan both in the pulpit and in his newspaper *Manar*. On 8th September a large gathering of tribesmen was held at Palmyra, over which the Emir Fawaz Shaalan of the Ruwala tribe presided, which agreed a resolution affirming strict adherence to the Syrian Government; from this, and from other semi-inspired meetings, telegrams were sent to this legation condemning the project. On 15th September the President, at a party in honour of his 4th anniversary in office, spoke at considerable length against King Abdullah's manifesto and countered the King's offer with the suggestion that the part—i.e., Transjordan—should rejoin the whole—i.e., Syria. This speech, the terms of which were approved by Parliament on 29th September, rounded off the latest exchange of inter-Arab polemics, and interest switched to the question of Palestine, on which all Arab States seem to be in agreement as to the desirable end, though divided as to the means.

2. Syria was represented at the Political Committee of the Arab League which met at Sofar, Lebanon, on 16th September by the Prime Minister, who is also Minister for Foreign Affairs. Before leaving Damascus on 13th September for New York, the Emir Adel Arslan, Vice-President of the Syrian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, issued a statement to the press in which he em-

phasised that Palestine must become an independent Arab State, if necessary by force of arms. In this he echoed the public sentiments of all Syrian politicians, and, if clarification was necessary, presented the delegates attending the Political Committee with the official viewpoint of the Syrian representatives at New York. The recommendations of U.N.S.C.O.P. were unfavourably received throughout the country, and Syrians were in no doubt as to the attitude which the Political Committee would adopt. They were, as ever, suspicious of the movements of Brigadier Clayton, who arrived in Damascus on 16th September, and remained a few days. On 22nd September the Prime Minister summoned both the American and the British Chargés d'Affaires and handed them statements setting forth the Arab States' point of view on Palestine. Jamil Bey, questioned by Mr. Beaumont, was careful to say that the statement represented a "friendly warning" and not a threat. Meanwhile, the press had given a high proportion of its space to Palestine comment, and, as earlier in the month on behalf of Greater Syria, so now gatherings took place over the country resulting in a fresh crop of telegrams arriving at this legation. Foremost among the propagandists were the Ikhwan el Muslimeen, and Mustafa Sebai went on a ten days' tour in North Syria to preach and to inflame the youth of the country. On 22nd September the Minister of Defence made a visit of inspection to the southern frontier area: as a result of which the gendarmerie posts were stiffened with army posts. The statement made by Mr. Creech Jones on 26th September awakened keen interest in political circles, and there has recently been very little attempt to discount British sincerity in making it.

3. Although internal events have been overshadowed by external, there have been some interesting events. In Aleppo

on 6th September rioting took place as a result of the high cost of flour. Two men were officially reported killed, though the number is probably about five, and twenty wounded were taken to hospital. The riots were said to have been instigated by the followers of the National *bloc*, who were defeated in the elections. After inept handling at first, the situation was calmed by promises of better distribution in the future. Retail prices of foodstuffs are in fact rising steadily as a result of seasonal shortages and hoarding by producers. On 5th September the Arab Engineers' Conference met in Damascus, with representatives from all Arab countries. The President and Prime Minister were disconcerted to hear Faris Khoury acclaimed at the opening meeting as the greatest Arab hero. Certainly Faris Bey is considered so by many in Syria as a result of the line he took at New York during the Anglo-Egyptian hearing. This conference was succeeded on 13th September by the Arab Antiquities Conference, attended also by representatives from Arab states, including Ahmad ben Aboud representing the Sultan of Morocco. Owing to these conferences and the meeting of the Arab League Political Committee, the President has had the opportunity of meeting many prominent personalities, among them Saleh Jabr on the 14th, Youssuf Yassin on the 15th, General Taha el Hashimi on the 16th, Colonel Mohammed Yussef, King Farouk's envoy, on the 21st. Mohammed Ikhbal Shadai, self-proclaimed High Commissioner of Pakistan to the Arab States, who has been making inflammatory speeches here, also had dinner with the President.

4. Considerable parliamentary manoeuvring took place during the month to secure grouping of parties. The largest meeting, called by Rushdi Kykhia at Baalbeck in the middle of the month and attended by some fifty Deputies—over a third of the Deputies in Parliament—failed to agree on a common policy, and when the Chamber assembled for an extraordinary session on 27th September it was a Chamber of individuals. In Parliament Jamil Mardam's former Government was still in power during the first procedural session, during which Faris Bey Khoury was elected President of the Chamber in his absence by an overwhelming majority. The second session produced a resolution supporting the President's condemnation of King Abdullah's manifesto, which was voted solidly after eighteen Deputies had

spoken. Despite press clamour the order paper contained, however, no reference to the agreement signed on 1st September, 1947, by the Syrian Government with Tapline, the terms of which have not yet been published. The Jebel Druze was not represented in the Chamber, since the election of Druze Deputies had not been confirmed. Affairs in the Jebel Druze seem in a good way to settlement. The rival factions having failed to agree, the Government applied its own mediation. The Attrash Deputies declared they would resign their seats to prove their impartiality, and the Emir Hassan resigned his post as Mohafez and was replaced by Suleiman Nassar, a Government nominee. Fresh elections have not yet been held, but it is clear that whatever the outcome the Attrash family has increased its prestige in the Jebel Druze by this move. Kermit Roosevelt, who arrived in Syria early in the month, spent some time in Soueida interviewing all and sundry from 14th September onwards.

5. At the moment American popularity here is low, for which there are two main reasons. The first is the friendly attitude towards Zionism which the Syrians attribute to the Americans, basing their contentions on Mr. Marshall's recent speech; and the second springs from the feeling that Tapline, in securing an agreement on oil transit, have in some way diminished the independence of Syria, which finds itself being drawn by economic factors into the sphere of American influence, and sees evidence of this in the rapidly growing American colony and the frequent arrival of Pan-American aircraft at Damascus airport. Despite this feeling, four Syrian Air Force officers have been nominated to proceed to Hartford University (or Harvard) for training in air mechanics; and sixteen more are going to Egypt for air photography and parachute instruction.

6. The Syrian attitude towards the French is closely linked with financial matters, and reports that the French have requested repayment of sums due by the Syrian army send French popularity yet lower, to recover momentarily when reports favourable to Syria are received of the Franco-Syrian-Lebanese financial talks in Paris. Hassan Jabbara returned from the meeting of the International Trade Organisation at Geneva on 14th September and left for Paris for the financial discussions on 27th September. The reopening

of French schools provides a regular ground for contention; by 1st October only four out of some fifty schools in Syria, which before 1945 were supported by the *Ceuvres Françaises*, had failed to reopen.

7. Mr. Scrivener left Damascus on 2nd September, and Mr. Beaumont assumed charge of His Majesty's Legation until the return of Mr. Dundas on 29th September. Dr. Anwar Hatem, head of the Prime Minister's office, left for England on 6th September for a month's visit as a guest of the British Council, and in a message to the press was quoted as enthusiastic about what he saw. The provision of a ship for this year's pilgrimage also redounded to our credit. On 24th September Abdul Rahman Hakki Bey, Egyptian Minister to Syria and the Lebanon, left on transfer to Rome. Sir Alec Kirkbride passed through Damascus on 29th September *en route* to Amman.

II.—Press

Once again the Greater Syria Plan has been the biggest news story of the month. The less responsible newspapers elaborated sensationally upon the comings and goings of politicians and special envoys whom Abdullah's declaration had set in motion among the different Arab capitals. Several papers seemed disposed to bring the matter to a head. They resorted to the technique of a storm of telegraphic protests against Amman supposed to be coming in from every part of Syria, made strident attacks upon King Abdullah and gave the impression that the whole country was seething with indignation over the threat to the Republican Constitution. Then the President publicly denounced the plan and called upon Transjordan to rise and join Syria. His speech was widely publicised but received little comment. Prominent coverage was given at the end of the month to a similar denunciation made by Parliament.

At one point in the campaign *Manar* named Mr. Scrivener, Glubb Pasha and

Samir Rifa'i as agents of the plot. Two new motives were advanced for British interference. *Alam* said that by the Greater Syria Plan the British were attempting to retrieve their failure to conclude (through Brigadier Clayton) an alliance with the Syrian Government. *Manar* (probably with Faris Khoury in mind) accused Britain of aiming at the creation of a Greater but dependent Syria in order to silence the voice of Syria in international affairs.

The Palestine question has taken second place. Without hesitation the Damascus press condemned the majority and minority reports of U.N.S.C.O.P., one newspaper remarking pathetically that even the Jews were surprised to find Jaffa included in their zone. The decisions taken at the Sofar meeting of the Arab League were received with general satisfaction. One or two commentators thought that they had not gone far enough, but *Alef Ba* tried to moderate the clamour for a Holy War by advocating boycott and economic sanctions. Initial comment on the Creech Jones statement showed approval, but later on newspapers were reluctant to take it at its face-value. One editor, who dismissed it in writing as a "manœuvre," privately expressed the opinion that an early withdrawal would leave the Jews better prepared than the Arabs to defend their interests by arms. The efforts of Mustafa Sebai (El Ikhwan el Muslimeen) to recruit an Arab "Army of Liberation" and of Fawzi Kuwakji to co-ordinate possible Arab aggression have been favourably commented upon.

Apart from occasional praise for Faris Khoury and an article accusing Britain of deliberately introducing the cholera germ, discussion of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute has petered out.

News from the home front has been largely concerned with conflicting suggestions and forecasts about the make-up of the new Parliament and Cabinet.

E 11181/171/89

No. 36

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 8 FOR OCTOBER 1947

(Received 28th November)

Political

At the beginning of the month the new Syrian Parliament was continuing its First Extraordinary Session and Jamil Mardam's Cabinet, which had supervised the

elections, was still in office. On 2nd October the resignation of the Cabinet was announced. A period of intense political activity followed, as a result of which Jamil Mardam was successful in obtaining the

support of the Popular Party leaders by the offer of two Cabinet appointments, on the understanding that they would support the proposed change in the Constitution intended to enable the Syrian President to retain office for a second term. On 7th October Jamil Mardam's new Cabinet was announced, as follows:—

Jamil Mardam: Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Said Ghazzi: Minister of National Economy.

Ahmed Sharabati: Minister of Defence.

Webbi Hariri: Minister of Finance.

Ahmed Rif: Minister of Justice and Public Works.

Muhsin Barazi: Minister of the Interior and Health.

Munir Ajlani: Minister of Education.

2. The Cabinet, unlike its predecessors, contains no Christian member; the Ministries of Defence and Interior are held by personal supporters of the President, who, therefore, has direct control of all the security forces in the country; the Ministers of Finance and Public Works and Justice are Aleppines and members of the Popular Party. The Cabinet should be able to maintain a somewhat shaky majority in the Chamber as long as it retains the support of the Popular Party.

3. On 12th October the Prime Minister made a statement of his new Government's policy which contained nothing of particular interest except for a categorical refusal to accept the partition of Palestine and a statement in favour of the "republican democratic order" of Syria. On the 16th, Jamil Mardam's Government received a vote of confidence by 90 votes to 20 with 3 abstentions out of a total of 136. While this majority appears substantial enough, the figures are misleading, since there is a group of some thirty tribal sheikhs and country gentlemen who are in no way interested in party politics, but who require specific assistance from the Government in power and who, therefore, vote on the winning side. These 30 count 60 on a division, which might reduce Jamil Mardam's majority to 10—a more accurate reflection of his parliamentary position.

4. The opening of the first sitting of the First Ordinary Session of the new Chamber was postponed by presidential decree from 21st October to 8th November ostensibly because of the Bayram holiday, but in reality to allow Jamil Mardam and the Presi-

dent sufficient time to lobby for the proposed constitutional change.

5. The statement by the Secretary of State for the Colonies concerning the British attitude towards Palestine was at first received with some scepticism, but before long it was generally realised that His Majesty's Government intended to withdraw both troops and administration from Palestine if no agreement was reached. On the whole, this attitude was welcomed as indicating that at last His Majesty's Government had decided not to impose by force a Jewish State in Palestine. Public interest soon turned to the meeting of the Arab League in Beirut which opened on 7th October. The decision taken by the Political Committee to recommend that the Arab States should move troops to the Palestine frontier and the publicity given to the eventual withdrawal of British troops resulted in the wildest rumours and a general impression among the public that action was imminent. Syrian troops began to move towards the Palestine frontier a few hours after the recommendation was announced, and excitement in Damascus became intense. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires reminded the Syrian Ministers of Defence and Interior that the Government of Palestine was still responsible for the security and defence of that country, and gave as his personal opinion that the Syrian action was premature and was likely to prove provocative to the inhabitants of Palestine and, as such, would certainly be viewed with disfavour by His Majesty's Government. A private conversation between the information officer of His Majesty's Legation and two Damascus editors resulted in the publication of what was stated to be a communiqué from the British Legation along the lines of the Chargé d'Affaires' conversation with the Ministers of Defence and Interior. The publicity given to the facts concerning British responsibility in Palestine had the effect of silencing the more violent protagonists of direct and immediate action.

6. Later in the month the news that the United States and Russia were sponsoring partition created dismay. Responsible Syrians did not hesitate to express the view that Russia's sole object in so doing was to obtain a footing in Palestine; and there were outspoken comments against America. There is no doubt that the overall result has been an improvement in popular feeling

towards Great Britain at the expense of America and Russia.

7. On 25th October, the Socony Vacuum Oil Company and the Shell Company, who between them supply almost the whole of the fuel oils for Syria and the Lebanon, informed the local Governments jointly that owing to the world shortage of tankers, pipelines and refining plant, the normal increases required by the two States for 1948 could not be supplied; furthermore, the American company would be unable to continue supplying at the present rate for the remainder of 1947: the companies had, however, agreed to pool their stocks and place them at the disposal of the two Governments so that the best possible distribution of the fuel oil available could be made by the two Governments. The immediate reaction in Government circles and later, when the news became known, on public opinion was that the reduction of oil had been made either for political reasons, or for exerting pressure to obtain the ratification of pipeline agreements or to enable the companies to raise the price of fuel. While the cut in petrol is unlikely to have any serious repercussions, the reduction in the quantity of gas oil will seriously affect the suppliers of electricity and the users of gas oil engines for spinning, weaving, olive pressing and pumping. It is certain that the Syrian Government will try to obtain fuel oils from Russian sources.

8. The refusal of the Government to recognise the elections held in July in Jebel Druze, in which the followers of the Attrash family had been successful and the announcement that fresh elections would be held in the Jebel at the beginning of November resulted in increasing tension between the Attrash family and the supporters of the Assalis, who have undoubtedly been encouraged and assisted by the Government in their opposition to the Attrashes. A few minor incidents occurred towards the end of the month, and, as the Government have now provided the Assalis with arms, there is little doubt that trouble of a more violent nature will occur shortly. While Jamil Mardam has shown himself ready to approve of some compromise between the two factions, which would enable both to be represented in Parliament, the Syrian President has refused to endorse any such agreement and appears determined to force the issue between the two families with the intention of destroying once and for all the power

of the Attrashes. Although there may be some clashes, it is unlikely that the President will succeed in persuading the Druzes to destroy each other, a feat which neither the Turks nor the French were able to achieve. The Attrash family are in close touch with King Abdullah, who has so far refrained from giving them assistance.

9. A series of minor incidents occurred on the Palestine frontier, all of which ended amicably. A British armoured car entered Syrian territory and its occupants were arrested, fed and returned: five Jewish Settlement police were arrested in Syria by the Syrian authorities and returned to Palestine two days later after identification by a Palestine police officer as auxiliary police of the Government of Palestine. An ill-mannered party of Syrian officers, ignoring regulations, visited the bridge at Banat Yaccoub in Palestine territory, and a frontier post of Syrian army other ranks who had encamped a few hundred yards within the Palestine frontier were arrested but returned later the same day by the Palestine authorities after explanation had been given and accepted. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires has made repeated personal representations to members of the Syrian Government to ensure that incidents of this kind do not arise in future and has on several occasions expressed the High Commissioner's anxiety regarding the effect which the Syrian Army's movement in the frontier area may have on conditions inside Palestine. It is learnt that a number of the troops originally sent to the Quneitra area have already been withdrawn to barracks in Katana.

10. An almost complete press lock-out during the latter part of the month resulted in relief from the normal abuse of people and nations and the distortion of facts and intentions which are the stock-in-trade of the local newspapers. In addition, the opening of the Government schools has been postponed till 17th November. The Opposition members of Parliament and the professional agitators have therefore had little material to work with, and an unusual, and perhaps unreal, sensation of tranquillity has been experienced.

11. The ex-Mufti of Palestine, Haj Amin Husseini, lunched with the Syrian President on 16th October at Zebdani and spent a night in Damascus later in the month.

12. Two United States Senators visited Damascus from 13th to 15th October, and Aleppo on the 16th.

13. Dr. Negib Armanazi, Syrian Minister in London, was in Damascus during the latter half of the month, primarily on private business, though he took the opportunity to report fully to the President on the United Nations meeting which he had attended in New York. In conversation with His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires he made it quite clear that Faris el Khouri was entirely uncontrollable by the Syrian Government and declared emphatically that his actions were dictated solely by his desire to enhance his personal prestige.

14. On 22nd October, Ahmad Awad Bahrawy presented his letters of credence as Egyptian Minister in Syria. On 13th October, M. Frantisek Bachtik, the Czechoslovakian Minister, left Damascus; his successor has not yet been appointed.

Enclosure in No. 36

Press

During October the Damascus press dealt at some length with indications of the policy which Britain, then America and Russia were to pursue in the United Nations discussions on Palestine. Some newspapers found it difficult at first to accept the Creech Jones statement at its face-value. When it was repeated later in the month it caused only slight comment. By the end of the month little doubt of its sincerity seemed to remain and from the question of whether there would be a withdrawal at all, comment had moved forward to the stage of speculation as to who would succeed the British. The United States declaration was received with bitterness but little surprise: some newspapers sar-

castically contrasted the American attitude towards Arabs with their pretensions as champions of liberty. The Russian statement came as a shock. Commentators thought that it deprived the Arabs of their last diplomatic chance—a chance from which they were beginning to hope for too much. In the meantime the papers had been giving prominence to vague reports on preparations for the Holy War—recruiting campaigns and the collection of funds and equipment. Their excitement and satisfaction reached their height when, in a blaze of publicity, Syrian troops massed on the Palestine border. Arab penetrations into Palestine were reported. Towards the end of the month enthusiasm for the war had fallen off slightly. The one Damascus newspaper then remaining began to play largely upon the hope that the Partition Plan would not obtain a sufficient majority.

The press accepted the new Syrian Cabinet with more resignation than enthusiasm. Parliament's formal denunciation of the Greater Syria Plan met with general approval but the stormy debates on the validity of the election results soon convinced the anti-Government press that despite the elections political intrigue had hamstrung effective opposition.

On 16th October all Damascus newspapers except one ceased to appear. The proprietors locked out the typesetters in an attempt to reduce their wages by 25 per cent., and themselves went on strike in the hope of obtaining from the Government a dollar quota for newsprint, reductions on their telephone and transport bills, a rise in the cost of announcements and legislation to discriminate against advertisements on the screens of cinemas.

second consecutive term of office and for him to be elected by the ordinary voters and not by the Chamber of Deputies as at present. The Parliamentary Constitutional Party, headed by Rushdi Kekhia, were opposed to these alterations and intended to ensure a full debate. Jamil Mardam's Government, however, at the sitting of the Chamber on 11th November,

tabled an identic proposal to that of the ninety-six Deputies. The Acting Speaker of the Chamber thereupon stated that since ninety-six Deputies had signed an identic proposal the Government's proposal was carried by the necessary two-thirds majority and immediately declared the Chamber adjourned. By this move Jamil Mardam has overcome the first obstacle to the change of the Constitution. A simple majority vote at the next Ordinary Sitting of the Chamber in March, 1948 would effect the change.

2. Towards the end of the month attention again was focused on the United Nations Palestine discussions. Both the President and the Prime Minister spoke with dismay to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires about the possibility of partition being approved; the former asked that personal messages should be sent to the King, the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs urging that His Majesty's Government should vote against partition and that this personal message should be transmitted to the Governments of the Dominions since Syria had no diplomatic representation to them; the latter asked that a personal message should be sent to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asking His Majesty's Government to use their influence to obtain a decision against partition.

3. On 30th November demonstrations against the United Nations' decision started at an early hour. Demonstrators, after calling at the house of Fawzi Qawuqji in Damascus and being addressed by him, went a few hundred yards up the same road, damaged the United States Legation entering it and tearing down the United States flag and subsequently burning three legation cars standing outside the office. Later the same morning the Communist Party headquarters were ransacked and the contents burned. Party members in the building opened fire and four deaths occurred. The premises of the Friends of the Soviet Union were similarly treated, the French Legation was entered, the flag torn down and some destruction occurred and the Russian and Belgian Legations were stoned. No incidents occurred in any of the provincial towns.

4. Information subsequently received showed conclusively that the Syrian Government encouraged, if not sponsored, the demonstrations. The feeling which at first perhaps naturally was directed against those countries which had voted for par-

tion will probably turn, on second thoughts, against the British as being the original sponsors of the Balfour Declaration and of the consequent immigration of Jews into Palestine. Any further outbreak of rioting may therefore be directed against British lives and property.

5. Speeches were made to the demonstrators on 30th November by the Syrian President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Education. All thanked the demonstrators for showing their disapproval of the United Nations decision and their support for the Palestine Arabs. The President stressed the fact that the enemy was Zionism and said that he and the Government would be in the forefront of the fight; he asked the demonstrators to refrain from attacking foreign legations and consulates. The speeches made by members of the Government were of a fiery nature and promised that the Government would take all possible steps to fight partition and that recruiting offices for volunteers would be immediately opened.

6. The tension between the Attrash and Assali supporters in the Jebel Druze referred to in paragraph 8 of Monthly Political Summary issued by this legation for the month of October came to a head early in the month in a battle between the two factions near Qorayeh which resulted in the complete rout of the Assali supporters of whom about twenty were killed. An attempt at mediation by Kamil Jumblat, a leading Lebanese Druze, came to nothing since he could obtain no undertaking from the Syrian Government that they would agree to any specific terms of settlement. Aref Nakadi, a Lebanese of Druze extraction and now President of the Syrian Council of State, was sent by the Government to negotiate a settlement and is reported to have obtained the agreement of both parties to a truce lasting to the end of this year; he has taken up the vacant post of Mohafez of the Jebel Druze which, he has announced, will in future be known as the Mohafazat of Soneida. The result so far of the series of incidents has undoubtedly been the strengthening of the prestige of the Attrash family in the Jebel, but no agreement has yet been reached with the Government about representation in the Chamber of Deputies. For the time being, however, the area is quiet.

7. The reduction in the supply of fuel oil for the year 1947 announced by the Socony

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No. 37

SYRIA: POLITICAL SUMMARY No. 9 FOR NOVEMBER 1947

(Received 23rd December)

Political

Against a background of rising tension over the United Nations' deliberations on Palestine the main political interest of the first part of the month was centred on the proposal tabled by ninety-six Deputies for various amendments to the Syrian Constitution which, *inter alia*, would enable the President of the Republic to hold a

Vacuum Oil Company (see paragraph 7 of the previous report) led to the announcement by the Syrian Government of rationing for petrol and gas oil. On the day that rationing was to come into effect the Socony Vacuum Oil Company informed their agent in Damascus and the Syrian Government, without reference to the American Chargé d'Affaires in Damascus or the Shell Company representative, that they would continue to supply without reductions for the remainder of this year. It is learnt, however, that the Socony representative from Cairo informed the Syrian Government a few days later that while supplies would be kept up for the remainder of this year, the country's requirements could be met only from their 1948 allocation and that rationing therefore would have to be reinstated before the new year.

8. Mr. Luigi Cortese, Italian Minister to Syria, presented his letters of credence on 6th November. The Syrian Council of Ministers passed a decision to establish diplomatic relations with Ecuador.

9. On 4th November a party of some 150 naval ratings and forty-five officers visited Damascus for the day from H.M.S. *Ocean*, which was paying a visit to Beirut. They were entertained to lunch by the British community at the British Legation. As there was no chance of an English clergyman being available on 9th November, a commemoration ceremony was held at the British Cemetery in Damascus on 11th November when the chaplain from Beirut was able to be present. The service was attended by a number of Americans but no non-British nationals were invited. On 20th November the British community invited members of the Diplomatic Corps and about 150 Syrian notables to a reception followed by a dance at the British Legation. Members of the Government attended.

10. Sir Firoz Khan Noon, personal representative of Mohamed Ali Jinnah, stayed in Damascus as the guest of the Syrian Government from 12th till 14th of the month. He left for Amman and returned on 16th to see the Syrian army manoeuvres near Quneitra with which he was not impressed.

11. Mr. Troutbeck, the head of the British Middle East Office, arrived from Bagdad on 27th of the month and was received by the President and Prime Minister. Azzam Pasha spent several days in Damascus after his return from Amman and Bagdad and left with Sir Firoz Khan

Noon for Riyadh. He was considerably exercised to find out at precisely what stage of British evacuation would the Government of Palestine no longer consider itself responsible for law and order in the parts of the country from which British administration and troops had been evacuated. His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires was unable to enlighten him.

Press

1. Early in November, after the Government had managed the first steps towards a change in the Constitution without being publicly challenged, the controllers of the Opposition press realised that the time had come for them to break the two-sided stoppage of newspapers which all but one of the Damascus proprietors had brought about in October by locking out their typesetters and striking for concessions from the authorities. *Nidal* first withdrew its pressure from the typesetters and rushed to print in denunciation "of the tortuous and illegal methods employed by the Government under President Quwatli." It was quickly silenced by suspension. It appeared under its usual alias *Nisal*. *Nisal* was suspended. Its editor was given hospitality in the columns of *Yaqza* in which he wrote of "the dishonest subterfuges employed in maintaining power." *Yaqza* suffered the same fate as *Nidal* and *Nisal* and before the end of the month *Baath*, *Nizam*, *Dunya* and *Suri el Jedid* had paid a similar penalty for their criticism of the existing regime. Two of the remaining newspapers protested hotly against a decision by the Palestine Government to ban the entry of "inflammatory" Arabic publications.

2. Although its optimism had been damped by the unusual coincidence between the Russian and the American views, until the middle of the month, the Damascus press hoped that the plan for the partition of Palestine would not obtain a big enough majority to pass. One or two papers referred with misgiving to the possibility of King Abdullah annexing the Arab part of the country. In the last fortnight excitement continued to rise and the demand for a Holy War was made with growing insistence. The most bitter indignation was reserved for the United States who was accused of trying to "cut the jugular vein of the Middle East." The papers suggested various reprisals, among them non-ratification by Syria of the TAP

Agreement. Their tone towards Russia was reproachful but less hostile than towards America. Britain's stand on the side-line did not secure her immunity from criticism. One paper referred to her "sham righteousness." *Manar* (Muslim Brotherhood) devoted two articles to the familiar "perfidious Albion" routine and called Britain "an old snake."

3. Official explanations of the causes of the petrol shortage were received sceptically by the press. The presidential newspapers asked whether the crisis had not been brought on by politics rather than

economics. Some editors called for the abolition of all concessions to foreign companies, described in *Alam* as "the last weapon left to the coloniser" and in *Manar* as "nests of espionage." In this connexion, too, the Syrian Government was advised not to ratify the agreement with Tapline.

4. By the end of the month as a result of the long list of suspension casualties and excitement over Palestine, there was a marked falling off in comment on internal affairs and criticism of the Government.